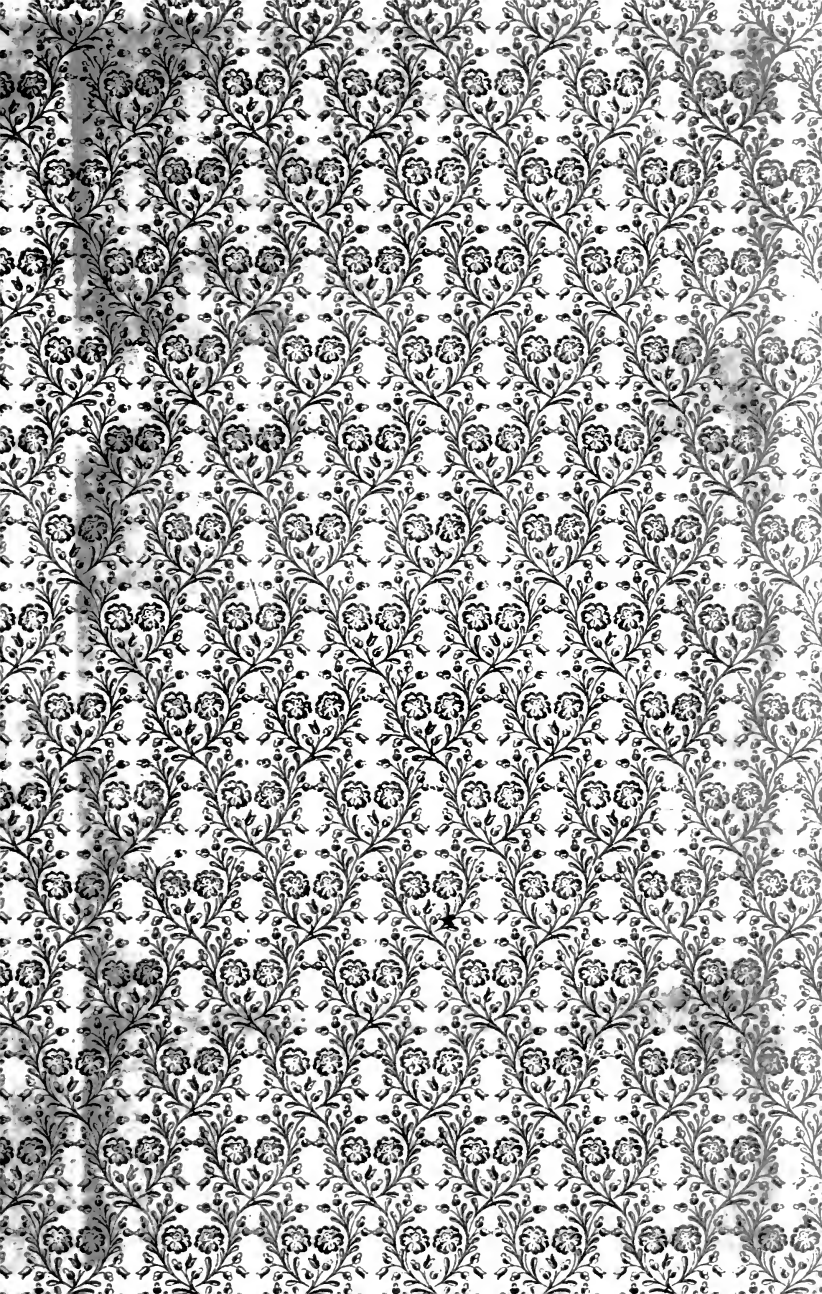




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THE CONVICT SHIP

BY

W. CLARK RUSSELL

AUTHOR OF

'THE WRECK OF THE GROSVENOR' 'MY SHIPMATE LOUISE'

'THE PHANTOM DEATH' ETC.



IN THREE VOLUMES—VOL. I.

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THE CONVICT SHIP

CHAPTER I

HER FATHER'S DEATH

I WAS in my twenty-fourth year when I underwent the tragic and amazing experiences which, with the help of a friend, I propose to relate in these pages. I am now seventy-seven; but I am in good health and enjoy all my faculties, saving my hearing; my memory is brisk, and my friends find it very faithful, and what is here set down you may accept as the truth.

It is long ago since the last convict ship sailed away from these shores with her horrid burden of guilt and grief and passions of a hundred devilish sorts; I don't know how long it is since the last of the convict ships passed down Channel on her way to colonies

which were like to become a sort of shambles—for they were hanging half a score of men a day for murder in those times—if this horrid commerce in felons had not ended; when that ship had weighed and sailed she passed away to return no more as a prison craft. When she faded out of sight she was a vanished type, and when she climbed, moon-like, above the horizon under full breast of shining canvas, she was an honest ship again, never more to be debauched by opportunities to tender for the transport of criminals.

Before I lift the curtain upon my ship, the Convict Ship in which I sailed, I must hold you in talk concerning some matters which go before the sailing of the vessel; for I have to explain how it came about that I, a woman, was on board of a convict ship full of male malefactors.

I was born in the parish of Stepney in the year 1814. My father was Mr. Benjamin Johnstone, a well-known man—locally, I mean—in his day. He had been put to sea as a boy very young; had risen steadily and

made his way to command, saved money with a liberal thriftiness that enabled him to enjoy life modestly and to hold the respect of his friends. He built a little ship for a venture, did well, bought or built a second, and at the age of forty-five owned a fleet of four or five coasters, all trading out of the Thames. He purchased a house at Stepney for the convenience of the district.

At Stepney in my young days lived many respectable families, and I don't doubt that many respectable families still live at Stepney ; but it is true that all that part of London has sunk since I was a little girl, and the sort of people who flourished in the east in the beginning of the century have now gone west with the jerry trowel and the nine-inch wall. My father's house in Stepney might have been a lord's in its time. It was strong as a fortress, cosy and homely, rich within doors with the colouring of age. It still stands ; I visited it last year, but it is no longer a private house.

I was about twelve years old when my father died. The manner of his going was

very sudden and fearful, and, old as I am, when I think of it I feel afraid, so haunting is youthful impression, the shock of it often trembling through the longest years into the last beats of one's heart. My cousin, Will Johnstone, had been brought over from his house near the Tower to spend the afternoon with me. He was between six and seven years of age, a fine little manly boy, the only son of my father's brother, William Johnstone, a lawyer, whose house and office were near the Tower. This little Will and I sat at the table in the parlour, playing at some game, and very noisy.

It was a November afternoon, the atmosphere of a true London sullenness; the fire burnt heartily, and the walls were merry with the dance of the flames, and the candle stood unlighted upon the mantelpiece. My father sat in an arm-chair close to the fire; he smoked a long clay pipe, and his eyes were fixed upon the glowing coals. He was a handsome man; I have his image before me. He had the completest air of a sailor that is to be figured. I seldom see such faces

as his now. But then faces belong to times. My father's belonged to his century ; and you would seek for it there and not before nor after.

He sat with his legs crossed and his eyes upon the fire. Suddenly looking around, he cried, with some temper : ' Not so much noise, little 'uns ! not so much noise, or you 'll have to go to bed.' Then his face relaxed, and I, with my child's eyes, saw he was sorry for having spoken so sharply. ' Little ones,' said he softly, ' let's have a game. Let's see who can go to sleep first and keep asleep longest ;' and dropping his hand so as to bring the pipe from his mouth, he sank his chin and shut his eyes, and snored once or twice as a make-believe.

I sank my head and closed my eyes as father had, and little Will shammed to be asleep. We were silent a minute or more. The pipe then fell from my father's hand and lay in halves upon the floor. There was nothing in this. It was a common clay pipe, and father would break such things pretty nearly as often as he smoked them. I now

peeped at Will; he was peeping at me. The child giggled, and burst into a little half-suffocated laugh.

‘Hush!’ said I; and now, being weary of this sort of sport, I looked at father and cried out: ‘I can’t sleep any longer.’

He never answered, so I stepped round the table to his chair to wake him up, and pulled him by the arm, and still he would not answer. I climbed upon his knee, and just then a bright gas flame spurted out of a lump of coal, and I saw his face very clearly. What was there in it to acquaint my childish sight with the thing that had come to him? I fell from his knee and ran to the door, and shrieked for mother. She was in the next room, or back parlour, talking with a woman hired to sew.

‘Mother,’ said I, ‘father can’t wake up.’

‘What do you mean, Marian? Where is he?’

‘We have been playing at sleep, and he can’t wake up,’ said I, and I began to cry.

She went into the room with a fear and wildness in her manner, stopped to lean upon

the table and look at her husband, and in that pause I see her now, though it did not pass beyond the space of a few heart-beats. She was about thirty-five years of age, a very fine figure of a woman indeed, with a vast profusion of yellow hair, of which she was exceedingly vain, often changing the fashion of wearing it two and three times in a week. The firelight was upon her face, and she showed like marble as she gazed at father with a hand under her left breast. Then running up to him she looked close, cried out, and fell in a swoon upon the floor. Will and I were horribly frightened, and screamed together. This brought the servants and the sewing-woman to us. A doctor was sent for, and when he arrived and examined father he pronounced him dead.

It was characteristic of my mother that she should faint when she looked at my father and believed him dead, though for all she knew he might have been in a fit, wanting instant attention to preserve him from death. She was a tender mother, and, I believe, did her best to be a good wife; but

she had not strength of character; she was pretty and thought herself beautiful, and was more easily to be cheated by flatterers than any woman I ever met in my life. Her weakness in this way was the cause of much unhappiness to me, of many a bitter secret tear some years after my father's death, as I will explain a little way farther on.

CHAPTER II

HER MEMORIES

I MISSED my father out of my life as though the sun had gone out of the heavens. I had been far more of a companion to him than my mother. I had venerated him as something superior to all created beings; which, I dare say, was not a little owing to his stories of the sea, to the various wonders he was able to recount, and to his descriptions of distant lands, as remote as the stars to my young imagination. The company he kept was nearly wholly composed of sailors, sea captains, either retired or actively employed. My mother would often be out visiting, passing an evening at a card party, or at a dance at some neighbour's when our parlour, which was long and wide, but low-ceiled, like a ship's cabin, would be half-full of father's nautical friends. I'd sit and listen then to

their talk ; for mother being absent there'd be nobody to bid me go to bed—as to father, he would have let me sit until he went to bed himself. Thus it was I heard so much talk of the sea, that I was able to discourse on ships and rigging, on high seas and gales of wind, on icebergs, whales and uncharted shoals, as though I had never lived out of a fore-castle. Indeed, I knew too much. I was often pert, lifted up my shrill voice in correction of some old captain, and so would raise a very thunder of laughter and applause in the room.

Again, I was often my father's companion in the trips he made in his own coasters down the river. Those excursions were the golden hours of my childhood. We'd row on board a little brig weighing from the Pool, and stay in the ship till we were off Gravesend, where we'd land. Mother never joined us. When the wind caused the vessel to lay over she said it made her sick. I dare say it did.

Father's little fleet was mainly composed of coasters, as I have said, grimy of deck for the most part, with a strong smell of the bilge

in the atmosphere of their darksome cabins, wagons in shape and staggerers in their gait, with a lean and coaly look aloft as they heeled, black and gaunt, from bank to bank of the river over the smooth stream of ebb or flood. But those trips made choice hours to me, and are sweeter than the memories of sport in the summer grass and of hunts in the rank growths of ditches and the country hedge.

I remember that during one of these trips we nearly ran down a large boat when we were not very far from Woolwich, lying over with the wind ahead and the water spitting briskly at our forefoot. I went to the side to look; she was a big boat with soldiers in her, and full of strange-looking men in gray clothes and a sort of Scotch cap. I saw the irons upon those men as the boat swept close past and heard the clank of the chains as the wretches shrank or started in terror at the sight of the mass of our bare, black hull, rolling like a storm-cloud almost right over them. Father was below. I asked Mr. Smears, the master of the brig,

who stood close alongside of me in a tall, rusty hat and a stout coat that descended to within a foot of his heels, what boat that was.

‘A convict boat, missy,’ he answered.

‘What are those people in her?’

‘Rogues all, missy—rogues all.’

‘Where are they going to?’ said I.

He pointed to a great wooden hulk that lay off Woolwich, the hull of a man-of-war, made hideous by a variety of deck erections, and by rows of linen fluttering betwixt the poles which rose out of her decks.

‘That’s where they ’re going to,’ said Mr. Smears. ‘And shall I tell ’ee who’s the skipper of that craft? ’Taint no Government bloke—let ne’er a man believe it! The skipper’s name begins with a D and ends with a h-L. I’m not going to say more, missy. Father ’ll supply ye with the missing letters. Yond skipper’s name begins with a D and ends with a h-L, and them livelies in gray,’ said he, nodding toward the boat we had nearly run down, ‘are his young ’uns, and they do credit to their parient, if looks ain’t lies.’

Then, starting up, he cried: 'Ready about, lads!' and a moment later the helm was put down and our canvas was wildly shaking, and then the brig heeled over and with steady sails ripped through the yellow lustrous surface of the river's breast on her slanting course down Woolwich Reach.

I did not long look at the great hull of the old man-of-war and her hideous deck erections and her flapping prison linen. I was a child, with a child's eye for beauty, and my gaze would quickly wander from the prison-ship which I was altogether too young to quicken and inform with the loathsome fascination one finds in all such abodes of human crime and miserable mortal distress; I say my eye would quickly turn from that horrible floating jail to the fifty sights of movement and colour round about; to the hoy with its cargo of passengers from Margate and a fiddle and a harp making music in the bows lazily stemming Londonward; to the barge going away with the tide, sending a scent of rich country across the wind from its lofty cargo of hay on whose summit lies a

man on his back, sound asleep; to the large ship fresh from the other side of the world with sailors dangling aloft, and a merry echo of capstanpawls timing a little crowd of men running round and round her forecastle; the wife of the captain aft talking to a waterman in a wherry over the side, and the captain himself, baked brown by the suns of three or four great oceans, excitedly stepping from rail to rail in a walk of impassioned anxiety and impatience.

I have the words, you see! Does the language of the deep sound strange in the mouth of a woman? The wives and daughters of military men may deliver themselves in the speech of the barracks and nobody thinks anything of it. Why should not the daughter of a sailor and the wife of a sailor possess the language of her father and of her husband's profession, and talk it whenever the need arises without raising wonder?

After my father's death, his little fleet of ships were sold, in accordance with the direction of his will. The thing was bungled. My mother was a poor woman of business. She

fell out with my uncle, William Johnstone, over the sale of the vessels, and put the business in the hands of a broker, who robbed us. Yet, when the estate was realised, we were pretty well to do. The freehold in Stepney was to come to me at the death of my mother. Under my father's will there was a settlement that secured me three hundred pounds a year. The trustees were two sea-captains. My mother was well provided for; but one saw, by the terms of my father's will, that he had no confidence in her. Yet he did not stipulate that she should not marry again; though, had I been older at the time, I should have looked for some condition of the sort, for he was very jealous. In fine, and what I have to relate obliges me to dwell upon these trumpery particulars, my father's will gave me his house at my mother's death, and secured three hundred pounds a year to me in any case when I should become of age or on my marriage, the interest meanwhile to grow and be mine; and then, at my mother's death, a portion of what had been willed to her was to revert to me, and the remainder

was to be distributed amongst two or three poor and distant relations and a few charities, all of them maritime.

Thus, at my father's death, I might fairly have been described by a forward-looking eye as what you would call a tolerably fair match; and at the age of seventeen I deserved to be thought so, not only because of my money and the pleasant old house that would be mine, but because of my good looks. At seventy-seven there can be no vanity in retrospect. Moreover, since this story is to be told, you shall have the whole truth. At seventeen, then, I was a tall, strong, well-made girl, broad, but in proportion, and they used to tell me that I carried my figure with the grace of a professional dancer. I was exactly opposite to my mother in colour. My hair was black as the wing of a raven; my eyes very black and filled with a strong light, which brightened to a look of fever in times of excitement; my complexion was pale but clear; my teeth large, white, and regular, and I showed them much in talking and laughing. I'll not deny that my

charms—and handsome I truly was—inclined to coarseness; by which I mean that they leaned toward the manly rather than the womanly side. My voice was a contralto, and when I sang I would sink to a note that was reckoned uncommonly deep for a girl.

My father had been dead about five years, when, one afternoon, my mother came to me in my bedroom. She was in her bonnet and out-door clothes, and I instantly noticed an agitation in her manner as she sat down beside the dressing-table and looked at me. I forget what I was about, but I recollect ceasing in it and standing up with my hands clasped, whilst I viewed her anxiously and with misgivings.

‘Marian,’ said she, with a forced smile, ‘I have come to give you a bit of news.’

‘What, mother?’

‘My hand has been asked in marriage, dear, and I have accepted.’

I felt the blood rush to my face, and then I turned cold, and, pulling a chair to me, sat down, but I did not speak.

‘Do you hear me, child?’

‘Your hand has been asked in marriage?’
said I. ‘By whom, mother?’

‘By Mr. Stanford,’ she answered, lowering her voice and sinking her eyes.

‘Mr. Stanford?’ I cried. ‘The doctor?’

‘Whom else?’ she replied, looking at me again and forcing another smile.

I was thunderstruck. Never for an instant had I suspected that there was more between them than such commonplace, matter-of-fact friendship as may exist between a medical man and those whom he attends. Mr. Stanford was the doctor one of the servants had run for when my father died. He had attended us during the preceding year, and he had prescribed for mother and me since, so that at this date we had known him six years. He was a widower and childless, and lived within ten minutes’ walk of our house. Occasionally he had looked in upon us, and sat during an evening for an hour or so; sometimes he had dined with us and we with him; but never had I observed any sort of behaviour in him or mother to hint at

what was coming—at what, indeed, had now come.

I should be needlessly detaining you from my own story to repeat all that passed between my mother and me on this occasion. I was beside myself with anger, mortification, jealousy—for I was jealous of my father's memory, abhorred the thought of his place being taken in his own house and in the affection of the wife whom he had loved, by such a man as Mr. Stanford. Nay, but it would have been all the same had Mr. Stanford been the greatest nobleman or the first character in Europe. I should have abominated him as an intruder, and have yearned for the hands of a man to toss him out o' window should he dare to occupy a house in which my father was as real a presence to my heart as though he were still alive and could kiss me and make me presents and carry me away out of the gloomy streets into the shining holiday road of the river.

My mother reproached me, and pleaded and wept. The weakness of her poor heart, God rest her, was very visible at this time.

She clung to me and held me to her, imploring me, as her only child, to consider how lonely she was, how sadly she stood in need of a protector, how good it would be for us both to have Mr. Stanford to watch over us! I broke away from her with a wet scarlet face and heaving bosom, and told her that if Mr. Stanford took my father's place I would cease to love or even to think of her as my mother. We both cried bitterly, and raised our voices and talked together as most women would at such a moment, not knowing what each other said. I do not condemn myself. I look back and hold that I was right to stand up for the memory of my beloved father, even to rage as I did against my mother's resolution to marry Mr. Stanford. I wondered at her; indeed, I was shocked. I was young and ardent and romantic, had a girl's notions of the loyalty of love and the obligations of keeping sacred the memory and the place of one who had been faithful and tender, who had nobly done his duty to his wife and child.

CHAPTER III

HER MOTHER DIES

At the age of seventeen I considered myself qualified to form a judgment of men, and I was amazed and indeed disgusted that my mother should see anything in Mr. Stanford to please her. He and my father were at the opposite ends of the sex, as far removed as the bows from the stern of a ship. He was a spare and narrow man, pale as veal, in complexion sandy, the expression of his countenance hard and acid, his eyes large and moist and the larger and moister for the magnifying spectacles he wore. But my mother would have her way, and a week after she had given me the news of the doctor's offer they were privately married.

My life from this date was one of constant and secret unhappiness. I could never answer Mr. Stanford with any approach to civility

without a violent effort. He strove at first to make friends with me, then gave up and took no more heed of me than had I been a shadow at the table or about the house. Yet, sometimes, I would make him pretty rudely and severely feel that he was an intruder, an abomination in my sight, a scandalous illustration of my mother's weakness of nature; and that was if ever he opened his lips about my father. I never suffered him to mention my father's name in my presence. He might be about to speak intending to praise, designing every manner of civility toward the memory of the dead; I minded him not; if he named my father I insulted him, and on two or three occasions forced him to quit the table, so strong and fiery was the injurious language I plied him with. My mother wept, threatened to swoon, did swoon once, and our home promised to become as wretched and clamorous as a lunatic asylum.

As an example of my hatred, not so much of the man as of his assumption of my father's place: he brought his door-plate and his lamp from his house, and when I saw his plate

upon the door that my father used to go in and out of I ran to a carpenter who lived a few streets off, brought him back with his tools, and ordered him to remove the plate, which I threw into the kitchen sink for the cook to find and report to her master.

Well, at the end of ten months, my mother died in childbed. The infant lived. It was a girl. My mother died; and when I went to her bedside and viewed her dead face, sweet in its everlasting sleep, for the look and wear of ten or fifteen years seemed to have been brushed off her countenance by the hand of death, I thought to myself: if she has gone to meet father, how will she excuse herself for her disloyalty? And then the little new-born babe that was in the next room began to cry, and I came away from that death-bed with tearless eyes and sat in my bedroom, thinking without weeping.

I have spoken of my uncle, William Johnstone, a lawyer, who lived in the neighbourhood of the Tower, and whose office was in his own dwelling-house. He, like my father, had but one child, Will Johnstone, that little

fellow who was playing with me when my father died. Mr. Johnstone's was a very comfortable house ; it afterward passed into the hands of a chart-seller. His clients were nearly wholly composed of sea-going people. He was said to be very learned in maritime law ; he was much consulted by masters and mates with grievances, and at his house, as at my father's formerly, you 'd meet few people who did not follow the ocean or did not do business with seafarers.

Mrs. Johnstone was three or four years older than her husband. She was a plain, homely, thoroughly good-hearted woman, incapable of an ill-natured thought ; one of those few people who are content to be as God made them. During my mother's brief married life with her second husband I was constantly with my aunt, and I believe I should have lived with her wholly but for my determination that my stepfather, the doctor, should not flatter himself he had sickened me out of my own home. Will was at this time at the Bluecoat School, laying in a stock of Latin and Greek for the fishes ;

for the lad was resolved to go to sea. His father, indeed, wished him to adopt that calling, and would say: 'What is the good of a cargo of learning the whole of which will be thrown up overboard the first dirty night down Channel?'

When mother died, my aunt entreated me to live with her and leave the doctor alone in his glory. My answer was: No, I should not think of leaving my own home if my stepfather were out of it, and I was not to be driven out because he chose to stay. I had the power to turn him out, and should have done so but for the baby. The little one was my mother's; I could not have turned a child of my mother's out of a home that had been my mother's. So I continued to live in the home that had come to me from my father. I occupied a set of rooms over the parlour-floor and took my meals in my own apartments, where I was attended by a maid who waited upon me and upon nobody else.

The child was called after my mother, and her name was mine—Marian. If in

passing up or down stairs I met the little creature in its nurse's arms, I would take it and kiss it, perhaps, and toss it a moment or two and then go my way. God forgive me, I could never bring myself to love that child. I never could think of it as my mother's, but as Mr. Stanford's. The sight, the sound of it would bring all my father into my heart, and I'd fall into a sort of passion merely in thinking that the memory of such a man should have been betrayed.

I dare say you will consider all this as an excess of loyalty in me. But loyal even to exaggeration my nature was to those I loved. It is no boast—merely a saying which this tale should justify.

After the death of my mother, the money paid to me through my trustees rose to an income of hard upon five hundred a year. I rejoice to say that Mr. Stanford got not one penny. My mother had been without the power to will away a farthing of what my father had left her. Otherwise I don't doubt the doctor would have come off with something more substantial than a ten-month

memory and my sullen toleration of his plate upon the door.

The equivalent in these times of five hundred a year would in those be about seven hundred; I was, therefore, a fortune and a fine, handsome young woman besides; and you will naturally ask: Had I any sweet-hearts, lovers, followers? To tell you the truth, I never gave men nor marriage a thought. I had friends in the neighbourhood, and I went among them, and I was also much at my aunt's, and not very easily, therefore, to be caught at home by any gentleman with an eye to a fine girl and an independency. Add likewise to my visiting, a great love of solitary rambling. I'd take a boat at Wapping and pass nearly a whole day upon the river, stepping ashore, perhaps, at some convenient landing-stairs or stage for a meal, and then returning to the wherry. Ah, those were delicious jaunts! They stand next in my memory in sweetness and happiness to those father had carried me on. I made nothing of being alone, and nobody took any notice of me. I was affronted but

once, and that was by a Wapping waterman who claimed that I had promised to use his boat, which was false. He was a poor creature, and nothing but the modesty of my sex hindered me from beating him with the short stout stick, silver-headed, with lead under the silver, that I always carried with me when I went alone. Another waterman whom I employed came up while the low fellow was slanging me, whipped off his coat like lightning and in five minutes blacked up both his opponent's eyes. This was punishment enough, and I was satisfied; and, as a reward, paid the chivalrous man double fare and made a point to hire his boat afterwards.

Or I would take my passage in a Calais steamer, land at Gravesend, or perhaps higher up, and wander about, perfectly happy in being alone, and with eyes and thoughts for nothing but the beauties of the country and the bright scene of the river. Often I was away for two and three days together; but on these occasions I always chose an inn where I was known, where I could depend upon the comfort of the entertainment and

the security of the house; where the landlady would welcome me as a friend, and provide me for the night with such little conveniences as I had left my home without. Everything was caprice with me in those days. I did what I liked, went where I liked, knew no master. My aunt once or twice, in her mild way, questioned the propriety of a young woman acting as I did, but my uncle stood up for me, pointed out that my blood was full of the old roaming instincts of my father; that I was quite old enough and strong enough to take care of myself; that what I did was my notion of enjoyment, and that I was in the right to be happy.

‘Keep on the wing while you can,’ said he. ‘Some of these days a big chap called a husband will come along, with a pair of shears in his hand, and the rest will be short farm-yard hops.’

On the other hand, my stepfather professed to be scandalised by my conduct. He marched into my room one day, after I had spent the night alone at Gravesend, and

asked leave to have a serious talk with me. But, on his beginning to tell me that I was not acting with that sort of decorum, with that regard to social observances, which is always expected and looked for in a young lady, I walked out of the room. He then addressed a long letter to me. His drift was still decorum and social observances, and what would his patients think. *I* thought of my father and how *he* would deal with this fellow, who was daring enough to teach me how to conduct myself, and in a passion I tore the letter in halves, slipped the pieces into an envelope, on which I wrote, 'Your advice is as objectionable as your company,' and bade my maid put the letter on the table of the room in which he received his patients.

But this is not telling you whether I had lovers, sweethearts, followers, or not. I have no room to go into that matter here; yet, let me name two young gentlemen. The first was the son of one of my trustees, Captain Galloway, who lived at Shadwell. The youth was good-looking, and had a pleasant, easy manner; he had been well educated, and at

this time held some post of small consequence in the London Docks. He hung about me much, contrived to meet me at friends' houses, often called, and managed sometimes to discover whither I had gone on a ramble, and to meet me as though by accident. I never doubted that I owed a good deal of this lad's attention to old Captain Galloway's fatherly advice. I laughed in my sleeve at the poor boy, though I was always gentle and kind to him; and if I never gave him any marked encouragement, for his father's sake I took care never to pain or in any way disconcert him; until one evening, happening to be at a quadrille party, to which he had been invited, though he did not attend, a pretty, sad-faced young creature was pointed out to me as a girl whom Jim Galloway had jilted so provokingly as to earn him a caning at the hands of the young lady's brother. This was enough for me. I first made sure that the story was true, and when next I met my youthful admirer I took him on one side, and, having told him what I had heard, informed him that he was a wicked, dangerous boy, unfit

for the society of ladies, and, affecting a great air of indignation, I asked if by his hanging about me he did not intend to make a fool of me too. What passed put an end to the young gentleman's addresses; but I always regret that this affair should have occasioned a coolness between Captain Galloway and myself.

My second suitor, or follower, so to term the fellow, was no less a person than my step-father's nephew. I had been spending my twenty-first birthday at my aunt's, and on my return home Mr. Stanford sent up word to know if I would see him. I was in a good humour, and told the maid to ask my step-father up. His motive in visiting me was to get me to allow him to invite his nephew to stay in the house. He wished to make his nephew's better acquaintance. The youth was studying medicine, and Mr. Stanford believed a time might come when it would be convenient to take him into partnership. I told him to ask his nephew and welcome.

‘What's the gentleman's name?’ said I.

‘Edward Potter,’ said he.

In two or three days' time Mr. Edward Potter drove up in a hackney coach. He brought a quantity of luggage, insomuch that I reckoned the partnership might not be so far off as my stepfather had hinted. Mr. Potter was a very corpulent young man; his neck was formed of rings of fat, and his small-clothes and arm sleeves sheathed his limbs as tight as a bladder holds lard. Nothing remarkable happened for some time, and then I discovered that this pursy young man was beginning to pay me some attention. To be sure, his opportunities in this way were few; he dared not enter my rooms without being invited, and then again, as you know, I was much away from home. Yet he would contrive to waylay me on the stairs and hold me in conversation, and he once went to the length of snatching up his hat and passing with me into the street, and walking with me down the Commercial Road to as far as Whitechapel, where I managed to shake him off.

One afternoon, on going downstairs, I heard the sound of voices in the parlour. The door

stood ajar; my name was uttered; and the sound of it arrested my steps. The voices within were those of Mr. Stanford and his nephew, who were still at table, lingering over their wine.

‘Yes, she has the temper of a devil,’ said my stepfather. ‘I love her so exceedingly that I’d like nothing better than to have her for a patient. But the wench’s constitution is as sound as her fortune. Why don’t you go ahead with her?’

‘She’s plaguy hard to get at,’ said Mr. Potter, in his strange voice, as though his mouth was full of grease.

‘You don’t shove enough,’ said his uncle. ‘A woman of her sort isn’t to be won by staring and breathing hard. Go for her boldly. Blunder into the sitting-room sometimes, follow her when she goes out and meet her round the next corner. It was the chance I spoke to your mother about and that you’re here for. She means five hundred a year and this house. You’ll need to kill or cure scores this way to earn five hundred a year.’

‘It’s like taking a naked light into a powder magazine to talk to her,’ said Mr. Potter. ‘Every look she gives one is a sort of explosion. I always feel like wishing that the road may be clear when I address her.’

‘You’re too fat for business,’ said his uncle. ‘I feared so. Give me a lean and hungry man for spirit. Cæsar knew Cassius, and I know you.’

I guessed it was Mr. Potter who thumped the table.

‘Give me some time and you’ll see,’ he said. ‘But in proportion as she troubles me on this side so I’ll give it her on t’other. Only let me get her, and for all your sneers at my figure I’ll have her on her knees to you and me within a month. Will you bet?’ and I heard him pound the table again.

He had used a word in this speech which I will not repeat—an odious, infamous word. I stepped in, flinging the door wide open and leaving it so. Mr. Potter started up from his chair, my stepfather lay back, his face drooped and very pale, and he looked at me under his half-closed lids. I stared Mr.

Potter in the face for a few moments without speaking; I then pointed to the door with the silver-headed cane I invariably carried.

‘Walk out, sir,’ said I.

He began to stammer.

‘Walk out!’ I repeated, and I menaced him.

‘Where am I to walk to?’ he said.

‘Out of this house,’ said I.

‘You had no right to listen, miss,’ said my stepfather.

I looked at him, then stepped round the table to the bell, which I pulled violently. My own maid, guessing the summons was mine, answered.

‘Jane,’ said I, ‘go instantly for a constable.’

‘There is no need to fetch a constable,’ exclaimed Mr. Stanford, getting up, ‘my nephew will leave the house.’

On this, Mr. Potter went out into the hall, and whilst he fumbled at the hatstand, called out:

‘I suppose I may take my luggage?’

I was determined to humble the dog to

an extremity, and told Jane to call in any two idle fellows she could see to remove Mr. Potter's luggage. She fetched two men from a public-house, and I took them upstairs into Mr. Potter's room and bade them carry his trunks below and put them on the pavement. When they had carried the trunks downstairs they returned for Mr. Potter's loose, unpacked apparel, which, acting on my instructions, they heaped along with his unpacked linen on top of the boxes on the pavement. I paid the two men for their trouble, and violently slammed the hall-door upon Mr. Potter, who stood in the road, gazed at by a fast-gathering crowd, waiting for the arrival of a hackney coach, which was very slow in coming.

As I passed upstairs, panting and heart-sick, Mr. Stanford came into the hall, and called out: 'You will ruin my practice.' I paused to see if he had more to say, and I was very thankful afterward that he had thought proper to immediately retire on observing me stop.

CHAPTER IV

SHE MEETS CAPTAIN BUTLER

AFTER this business you might suppose that Mr. Stanford made haste to remove his plate and his lamp to his old or another house. Not at all. He found it convenient to stay; and I contrived to endure him for the sake of the child, that was now between three and four years of age: a poor, feeble little creature, with but slender promise of life in its white face and thin frame.

A few weeks after the trouble with Mr. Potter had happened I went to my uncle's house near the Tower to sup and spend the evening. As with Stepney, so with this part; it has sunk pretty low. Yet when I was a girl some very respectable families lived in the neighbourhood of the Tower. My uncle's house, as I have said, included his offices. They had been the front and back parlours.

In the front office sat a couple of clerks, and the back was my uncle's private office, where he received his clients. The family occupied the upper part of the house, according to the good old fashion of trade, when men were not ashamed of their business. The rooms above corresponded with the offices below: the front room was furnished as a drawing-room; the back as a parlour.

I was as much at home in my uncle's house as if I had been his child, and, passing the servants who opened the door, I went upstairs to my aunt's bedroom to take off my bonnet and brush my hair. On the landing I heard voices in the drawing-room. I guessed my uncle had company, and hoped, unless there were others, that it was not old Mr. Simmonds, a ship-broker, a person to whom my uncle was always very civil and hospitable, as being useful in business, but who, to my mind, was the most wearisome, insipid, teasing old man that ever chair groaned under.

I removed my bonnet—you would laugh, were you to see the great, coal-scuttle-shaped

contrivance it was—brushed my hair, viewed myself a little complacently, for it was an April day, the wind brisk, and my walk had put some colour into my cheeks, from which my dark eyes took a clearer fire, and went to the drawing-room. On entering I found my uncle sitting with a gentleman. The stranger was not Mr. Simmonds. My aunt stood at the window, looking out.

‘Why, here am I watching for you!’ said she. ‘Marian, my dear, Captain Butler.’

I dropped the stranger a curtsey of those times, and with a quick glance gathered him. Small need to call him captain to know he was a sailor. His weather-darkened face, the fashion of his clothes, the indescribable ocean-rolling ease of his manner of rising and bowing to me, were assurance enough of his calling. I took him to be a man of about thirty. His eyes were a dark blue, and full of good-humour and intelligence; his hair was auburn, curling and plentiful; no feature of him but was admirable—nose, mouth, teeth—all combined in a face of manly beauty. He stood about five feet eleven, and, though there was

nothing of the soldier in his erect posture, his figure was without any hint of that rounded back and hanging-armed stoop which come to people who've had to pull and haul on a reeling deck for sour pork and creeping bread in their youth.

These and like points I did not notice all at once in that first glance; but before half an hour was gone I could have drawn a correct portrait of him from memory, so often, at every maidenly and modest opportunity, were my eyes upon him.

He had done business with uncle, and, having lately arrived in the Thames, had called and been asked to stay to supper and meet me. They had been talking about my cousin Will when I entered the room, and, after the introduction, continued the subject, my uncle seeming to be pretty full of it.

'Oh!' said I, catching up something that he had let fall. 'So, then, you have settled upon a ship for Will?'

'Yes,' he answered, 'and a fine ship she is.'

'There's no finer ship than the *Childe*

Harold out of the Thames,' said Captain Butler.

'And her captain is a very good sort of a man, we are told,' said my aunt.

'I have heard him well spoken of. I don't know him,' said Captain Butler.

'When does Will sail?' I asked.

'A fortnight to-day,' answered my uncle.

'You remember our compact?' I said eagerly.

My uncle smiled slowly and shook his head.

'But I say yes!' I cried, starting up in my impetuous way. 'Aunt, *you* know it was settled. Will was my playmate as a child. I love him as a brother, and I claim the right of giving him his outfit.'

'She is a sailor's child,' said my uncle to Captain Butler.

They told me Will was out; he would return before supper. In a short time I discovered that Captain Butler had been two years absent on a trading voyage in the Pacific; that he was without a ship at present, but was looking for the command of a new

barque of about six hundred and thirty tons, called the *Arab Chief*, in which he was thinking of purchasing a share. I admired him so much that I could not help feeling a sort of inquisitiveness, and asked him a number of questions about his voyage and the sea life. Indeed, I went further. I asked him where he lived and if he had any relatives. There was a boldness in me that was bred of many years of independence and of fearless indifference to people's opinion. I was by nature downright and off-hand, and whenever I had a question to ask I asked it, without ever troubling my head as to the sort of taste I was exhibiting. All this might have been partly owing to my lonely, independent life; to my being unloved and having nobody to love; to my having been as much an orphan when my father died as though I had lost my mother at the same time.

And yet, though some of my own sex may have turned up their noses at my plain, bold questioning of Captain Butler, there is no man, I vow, who would have disliked my

manner in me. Captain Butler warmed up, a fresh life came into his face with his frequent laugh, and he could not take his eyes off me. My uncle nursed his knee and watched us with a composed countenance. My aunt, who was a simple soul, followed the conversation as one who hears and sees nothing beyond what is said.

‘Captain Butler,’ said my uncle, presently, ‘ask Miss Marian why it is that she goes on living in the East when she has fortune enough to set up as a fine lady in the West?’

‘I was born in Stepney,’ said I. ‘My house is there. My father and mother lie buried there. I’ll not leave it.’

‘Who’s the wit,’ exclaimed Captain Butler, ‘who says that the further he goes West, the more convinced he is that the wise men came from the East?’

‘Pray, what is a fine lady?’ asked my aunt.

‘Ask the dressmakers,’ said Mr. Johnstone.

‘I hope my dear Marian will never change,’

said my aunt, looking fondly at me. 'She is fine enough, I am sure. If she goes West she'll be falling into company who'll make her ashamed of her poor East-end relatives.'

We rattled on in some such a fashion as this. It was because I was not blind, and not because I was vain, that I speedily saw that Captain Butler admired me greatly. If I stepped across the room, his eyes followed the motions of my figure. If I spoke, his gaze dwelt upon my lips. Even my poor, dear, slow-eyed aunt noticed the impression I had made, as I gathered from her occasional looks at her husband. My uncle asked me to sing, and I went to the piano and sang them a simple, melodious sea-song which I used to hear my father sing without an accompaniment. My knowledge of music was slight, but I had a correct ear and a strong voice, and felt whatever I sang, because I chose to sing only what I could feel, and my poor attempts always pleased. Captain Butler stood beside me at the piano while I sang; he could not have praised me more warmly had I been a leading lady at the Italian Opera.

I got up, laughing, and told him that the little music I had was by ear.

‘I think I was never properly educated,’ said I. ‘My father hated schools and believed that young girls thrown together made one another wicked. I was educated by governesses, and, really, to be able to read and write and to know the multiplication-table is a great deal to be thankful for.’

‘My brother was right,’ said my uncle. ‘I hate girls’ schools myself. Your finished school-miss knows all about Shakespeare and the musical classes, but she can’t tell how many ounces go to a pound of beef.’

While we chatted, Mr. and Mrs. Lorrimer were announced. Nobody expected them, but they were welcome. Old Mr. Lorrimer was a ship-chandler in a rather big way. He was a vestige of the dead century, and, saving the wig, went clothed almost exactly as his father had. I see him now with his frill, stockings, snuff-box, and the company smirk that was in vogue when he was a boy. He engaged my uncle in talk; my aunt and Mrs. Lorrimer drew chairs together, and

Captain Butler and I paired at a little distance from the others.

I liked this man so much, I admired him so greatly ; I had fallen so much in love with him, indeed, at the first sight of his handsome, winning face, that I found myself talking as freely as though we had known each other for years. I told him that I lived with my stepfather in the house that was my own, that my life was as dull as a sermon, that I found no pleasure in life outside my lonely rambles, which I described to him. I thought he looked grave when I told him I would be away from my home for two or three nights at a time.

‘ Every girl wants a mother,’ said he.

‘ And a father,’ said I ; ‘ but she can’t keep them.’

‘ Why don’t you go a voyage ?’

‘ I have never thought of going a voyage.’

‘ The world is a fine show,’ said he. ‘ It is well worth seeing. You are rich, and should see the world while you are young enough to enjoy the sight.’

‘ I have five hundred a year,’ said I.

‘You are rich, Miss Johnstone, nevertheless,’ said he; and his eyes made a very clear allusion to my face and figure—a more intelligible reference than had he spoken.

‘I have a good mind to go a voyage,’ said I. ‘I am sick of my life, I assure you. I hate my stepfather, and for all that I am rich, as you call it, I am as much alone as if I had been left to the parish. Oh, yes,’ said I, following his glance, ‘uncle and aunt are dear to me and I love them, but——’ And I lay back in my chair and yawned and stretched out my arms.

‘Come a voyage with me, Miss Johnstone,’ said he, laughing.

‘Where to?’ said I.

‘I can’t tell you yet, but you shall hear.’

‘Let me hear and you shall have my answer.’

‘Do you know anything about the sea?’

‘Do I know anything about the sea?’ I echoed, with a loud, derisive laugh that caused everybody to look at me. ‘I wonder if you could ask me a question about the sea which I couldn’t answer? Shall I put you a

ship about? Explain what reefing topsails means? Shall I wear ship for you? Shall I snug you down a full-rigged ship, beginning with the fore-royal-studding-sail?' And so I went on.

He laughed continuously while I talked. The others were now listening and laughing too.

Just then my cousin, Will Johnstone, came in, and I broke off my chat with Captain Butler to greet the lad. Will was at this time between fifteen and sixteen years of age. He was a manly-looking boy, easy and gentlemanly, fitter for the midshipman's quarters of a man-of-war than an apprentice's berth on board a merchantman. He had a look of my father, and I loved him for that. He was dressed in sea-going clothes, and though he had never been farther than Ramsgate in all his life, he carried his new calling so prettily, there was such a pleasantly-acted swing in his gait, you would have believed him fresh from a voyage round the world. He came to me eagerly when he had shaken hands with the others, took Captain Butler's chair, and told

me with a glowing face about his ship, the *Childe Harold*—what a fine ship she was, how like a frigate she sat upon the water, how that a fellow had told him she could easily reel out twelve upon a bowline.

‘She lies in the East India Docks. You must come and see her, Marian. When will you come? To-morrow—say to-morrow.’ Here he saw Captain Butler looking our way. ‘Will you come, too, sir? Will you come with my cousin?’

‘Come where?’ said Captain Butler.

‘Come to the East India Docks to-morrow to visit my ship, the *Childe Harold*?’

‘“My ship!”’ echoed my uncle.

‘At what hour?’ said Captain Butler.

Some talk went to this scheme; it was presently settled that Will and Captain Butler should dine at my house next day, and afterward we should visit the *Childe Harold*.

This was the merriest evening I had ever spent in my life. I sat at supper between Captain Butler and Will, and had never felt happier. My spirits were in a dance. I laughed even at poor old Mr. Lorrimer’s

jokes. After supper Captain Butler sang a song, and I liked it so well that I begged him to sing another. Then I sang. The old people sat down to whist in a corner. Captain Butler, Will, and I chatted, and so slipped that evening away; till I was startled on lifting my eyes to the clock to see that it was almost eleven.

How should I get home? Should I walk or drive? I stepped to the window and parted the curtains and saw the stars shining.

‘It is a fine night,’ said I. ‘Will, give me your company, and I’ll walk. I hate your coaches.’

‘Your way is my way, I believe,’ said Captain Butler. ‘May I accompany you?’

I went upstairs to put on my bonnet. My aunt accompanied me. She lighted candles beside a looking-glass, and I saw that my cheeks were red and that my eyes shone like diamonds.

‘I believe that you have made a conquest to-night, my dear,’ said my aunt.

‘A conquest has been made,’ I answered.

‘He is a very handsome fellow. And now you shall tell me that he is married.’

‘No more than you are.’

‘Engaged to be married, then?’

‘I’ll not answer that. Sailors are sailors.’

‘I have thoroughly enjoyed myself,’ said I, kissing her.

‘Do you think, my dear, that it is quite in order you should ask Captain Butler to dine with you to-morrow?’

‘Quite in order, aunt. If I am not to do what I like I will drown myself.’

But I kissed her again after I had said this as an apology for the strength with which I had spoken, and went downstairs.

Will and Captain Butler saw me to my house. The streets were pretty full and flaring. The night fine. I took Will’s arm, and the three of us went along leisurely past the Mint into Leman Street, and so into the Commercial Road. No very romantic walk, truly, though in this great world the woods and groves of the poets are not the only haunts of emotion. There is sentiment in the East as well as in the West; and in what do

the passions of Whitechapel differ from those of Tyburnia?

My maid was sitting up for me. Twelve o'clock struck soon after I reached home, so you will guess we had not hurried. For the first time for many a long night I could not sleep. I lay thinking all the time of Captain Butler. I had fallen in love with him, and I wondered at myself. No man that I had ever before met had made the least impression upon me. I knew my own heart well down to this moment—I had never given men nor their love a thought. In what, then, lay the magic of this man? I was so much in love with him that, had he stayed at my door after Will Johnstone had gone away and asked me to be his sweetheart and marry him, I should have consented. I was distracted with vexation and delight. All night long I lay thinking of him, and if I slept in snatches it was but to dream of him, so that, whether I was awake or slept, he was present to me. I felt that I must find out, and quickly find out, if he had a sweetheart. If so, why then I had not yet let go of the

reins ; but I must make haste, or the bit would be hard in the teeth and I should be run away with.

I thought of his suggestion to go a voyage with him, and pried close into it for an inner meaning ; but the memory of his manner would not suffer me to find more than had met my ear. To fall in love in an hour, thought I ! Well, it must run in the blood. Father fell in love with mother at first sight ; that had been her fond memory—she had boasted of it in his life and after his death—till, to my grief and to the souring of the best sweetness that her heart held, she swallowed the mumping prescription whose plate was upon my door, and whose lamp glowed like a danger signal over the plate.

CHAPTER V

SHE VISITS THE 'CHILDE HAROLD'

I ROSE early next morning, sent for the cook, and gave her certain instructions. The servants in our strangely ordered home were as much mine as my stepfather's; I paid half their wages. But my own maid was at my own cost, and she waited upon me only.

Captain Butler and my cousin arrived shortly after half-past twelve, and at one o'clock we sat down to as dainty and elegant a meal as I and the cook and my maid could contrive among us. We drank champagne; my father's silver was upon the table; in the middle was a rich hothouse nosegay, which had cost me a guinea and a half. My maid, a discreet, good-looking girl, waited admirably. My cousin stared, and asked me, boy-like, if I dined thus every day. I laughed and answered: 'Off as good dishes, Will, but

never so well, because I often dine alone when I dine at home at all.'

'I should like to dine with you every day,' said Will.

I had dressed myself with extraordinary care, but my eyes wanted the sparkle of the previous evening, my cheeks the rose of those merry hours. I wondered as I glanced at Captain Butler whether the thought of me had kept him awake all night. Somehow I could not look at him with the confidence of the previous evening. I felt shy; my eyes stole to his face and dropped on detection; my appetite was poor, and my laugh unnaturally loud with nerve. His own manner was a little constrained, and I saw, and my heart throbbed and leaped when I saw, admiration strong in his looks whenever he regarded, or addressed, or listened to me. Oh, thought I, what would I give now for sauciness enough to ask you downright: 'Have you a sweetheart?'

During the course of the dinner I said to him: 'Don't you think my way of living strange?'

'Not at all.'

'You need a stepfather to understand my unhappy state.'

'No very unhappy state, surely,' said he, looking at the table, and then round the well-furnished room.

'I think I shall go a voyage some of these days, Will,' said I.

'Sail with me, Marian,' he answered.

'Where's your ship bound to?'

'Sydney, New South Wales—a splendid trip. Three months there, three months back, three months to see the country in.'

'And you give me a fortnight to make up my mind!' said I, laughing. 'Don't they send the convicts to Sydney? I can't fancy that country. 'Tis seeing nothing to meet one's transported fellow-countrymen. There are plenty of such folks walking past this house at this minute. Who would leave Stepney for Sydney?'

My cousin asked what trade the *Arab Chief* would be in. Captain Butler answered that he believed she was to trade to the West Indies and eastern South American ports.

‘There’s a big world for you that way, Marian,’ said Will. ‘Down there the wind’s full of bright parrots, every tree writhes with monkeys. Robinson Crusoe lived all alone somewhere in those parts, that’s if the great river of Oroonoke’s where it was in Friday’s time. The home of the great sea serpent is in the Caribbean Sea, and if you kick up an old stone by chance you stand to unearth a mine of precious metal.’

I ended this by rising, and we soon afterwards left the house. It was a clear, cold afternoon, with a bright blue sky for London. We took a coach to Limehouse and then a boat. There is no change in the East India Docks in all these years. I went down to them for memory’s sake not very long ago, and all was the same, it seemed to me, saving the steamers. The basins were full of ships of many sizes and of all rigs; the air was radiant with the flicker and tremble of scores of flags; strange smells of distant countries loaded the atmosphere—sweet oils and spices, wool and scarlet oranges and scented timber. When I was a child my father had sometimes

brought me to these docks when he came to them on business; I thought of him as I looked, and felt a little girl again with the odd wonderment and delight of a child in me as I stared at the shipping and the complicated heights of spar and rigging, at the grinding cranes heavily lifting cargo in and out, as I breathed the odours of the littered quays, as I hearkened to the shouts, to the songs of the seamen at the winch or capstan, to the voices of the wind in the gear, soft in the fabric of the taller ships as the gay whistlings of silver pipes heard afar.

We walked leisurely along the quays. Will's ship lay in a corner at a distance, and he was for enthusiastically pressing forward to arrive at her. His ardent pace kept him ahead, and he often turned to invite us to come on. But I was listening to Captain Butler and was in no great hurry. At last we came to Will's ship, the *Childe Harold*. Oh, my great God, when I think of it! When I think of standing beside Captain Butler and looking at that ship with my

cousin at my elbow calling my attention to points of her with a young sailor's pride!

She was a very handsome vessel of her kind, and a big ship according to the burden of those days. Though she was receiving cargo fast, her sides towered high above the wall; she had been newly coppered, and her metal glanced sunnily upon the soup-like water she floated on. Captain Butler took my hand, and we followed Will up the gangway plank and gained the ship's deck. A man with a beard stood at the yawn of the great main hatch; Will touched his cap and whispered that he was the mate of the ship. Captain Butler went up and shook hands with him and rejoined us, saying that he had made the man's acquaintance at Callao. A quantity of cases were being swung over the rail, and as they were lowered down the hatch I heard a noise of voices below—calls and yells, and the kind of language you expect to hear arising from the hold of a ship that is populous with lumpers. Will took us into the cuddy, which you will now call the saloon; a fine cabin under the poop-deck,

with some sleeping berths on either hand. He then walked us forward to show us the apprentices' quarters.

The ship had what is known as a top-gallant forecastle, on either hand of which was a wing of cabin, a sort of deck-house, entered by a door that slid in grooves. The apprentices lived in the wing on the left, or port, or larboard side, as the expression then was.

'How many of you are there?' asked Captain Butler.

'Three,' answered my cousin.

The place was empty, and I entered it and looked about me to gather whether there was anything I could purchase to render the coarse, rude abode a little more hospitable to the sight.

'This won't be like being at home, Will?' said I.

'It will be seeing life, though, and starting on a career,' he answered.

'These are very snug quarters,' said Captain Butler. 'What sort of a forecastle have you, Johnstone?'

My cousin led us into a large, wooden cave. It was very gloomy here. We had to lift our feet high to enter the door. The huge windlass stood, a great mass of reddened timber and grinning ironwork, in front of the entrance to this fore-castle; abaft it rose the trunk of the foremast, and behind, again, the solid square of the galley, or kitchen; the thick shrouds descended on both sides; and, though it was a bright day, the shadows of these things lay in a twilight upon the fore-castle entrance, and I needed to stand awhile and accustom my eyes to the gloom before I could see.

‘This is a fine fore-castle,’ said Captain Butler. ‘Few crews get better parlours.’

The interior was empty. Rows of bunks on both sides ran ghostly in the obscurity of the bows.

‘What hatch is this?’ said I, pointing to a small, covered square in the deck close to where I stood.

‘That’ll be the way to the fore-peak,’ said Captain Butler.

‘What sort of a place is that?’ said I.

'The rats' nursery,' he answered, laughing.

'Have you been into it, Will?' said I.

'No. They keep coal and broom-handles there; odds and ends of stores, cans of oil, and everything that's unpleasant. I find things out by asking.'

'Right, Johnstone,' said Captain Butler. 'Keep on asking on board ship. That's the way to learn. How would you like to be an able seaman, Miss Johnstone, and sail before the mast and sleep in a place like this?'

'This would not be my end of the ship if I were a man,' said I.

We wandered aft on to the poop, whence we could command a view of the whole ship; and here we stood looking at the clamorous, gallant scene round about us, till the sun sank low across the river beyond Rotherhithe, and the shadow of the evening deepened the colours of the streaming flags, and hung a rusty mist out upon the farther reaches of the river, making the ships there loom dusky and swollen.

Captain Butler asked us if we would

drink tea with him at the Brunswick Hotel. I was now liking nothing better in the world than his company, and gladly accepted, and the three of us walked to the hotel and took a seat at a table in a window, where we had a view of the shipping; and here we drank tea and ate some small, sweet white-fish and passed a happy hour.

Captain Butler must have been less than a man, and without eyes in his head, if he had not by this time guessed that I was very much in love with him. I was sure he admired me; indeed, his admiration was unfeigned. I had never been loved by a man, and could not guess what was in the mind of this handsome sailor by merely observing the admiration that softened and sweetened the naturally gay and careless expression of his eyes, but it filled me with sweet delight to know that he admired me. This was a full, rich cup for my lips for a *first* draught. I liked to feel that he watched me. I'd turn my head a little way and talk to Will, and continue talking that Captain Butler might go on looking at me.

'I wish you were not sailing so soon, cousin,' said I. 'I'd plan more of these excursions. They make me forget I have a stepfather.'

'I hope your stepfather does not ill-treat you!' exclaimed Captain Butler, and some glow came into his face.

'No, no!' cried I, and I guessed that my eyes sparkled with a sudden heat of my spirits. 'Ill-treat me, indeed! The fact is the house isn't big enough for him and me. But I won't turn him out. He's the father of my mother's child, and my home was my mother's. But oh, I feel the gloom of it! I am alone. I *can't* take to the little one. And must it be year after year the same?' I cast my eyes down and breathed quickly; then, rounding upon Will, I cried with a loud silly laugh, 'You shall take me a voyage with you when you come home!'

'I like these excursions,' said Will. 'Don't you, Captain Butler?'

'I'd like them better if they didn't end so soon,' he answered.

‘I have a fortnight!’ exclaimed Will.
‘Let’s go a trip every day!’

Captain Butler’s eyes met mine.

‘You, of course, have something better to do?’ said I to him.

‘I have nothing to do.’

‘Where’s your ship?’

‘I have no ship,’ said he. ‘A barque, called the *Arab Chief*, is in course of completion at Sunderland. I may command her if I invest in her. I wish to consider. I am not rich, and I must see my way clearly before I venture all that I have.’

‘So you must. And I suppose you’ll go and live at Sunderland?’

‘No. I can do no good at Sunderland. Time enough to go to Sunderland when the ship is ready. She’s not building under my superintendence.’

‘You’ll visit your relatives in the country?’

‘I have relatives, but they don’t live in the country, and I shan’t visit them.’

‘Can’t we arrange for some more trips?’ said Will. ‘Let’s go sight-seeing every day.’

'Give us a sketch of your fancies, Johnstone,' said Captain Butler.

'Well,' he began, counting upon his fingers, 'there's a dinner at the Star and Garter; that's good sight-seeing number one. Then there's Greenwich yonder, and another dinner, number two. Then, what say you to Woolwich and a peep at the hulks? Call that job a day on the river, taking a boat at Billingsgate or the Tower. Number three.'

'Keep in shore, my lad,' said Captain Butler, laughing. 'You'll be having enough of the water soon.'

'What do ye say to Hampstead and tea? Then a dinner at the King's Arms at Hampton Court? And is Windsor too far off?' So he rattled.

Yet the jolly young fellow's proposals were very well to our liking, and before we rose to depart from the Brunswick Hotel we had schemed out a long holiday week. They saw me to my house, as on the previous night. Neither would come in. When they had left me, I felt very dull and lonely. I found a note on my table from a friend at Bow. She

asked me to a card-party next night, but I was in no humour to accept any invitations to houses where I was not likely to meet Captain Butler. Indeed, I had come home from this jaunt to the docks as deeply in love as ever woman was with a man in this world. I slept, it is true, but I dreamed of nothing but my handsome sailor, as my heart was already secretly calling him. I went to sea with him in a number of visions that night, quelled a mutiny among the sailors, saved Captain Butler's life at the risk of my own; and when he took me in his arms to thank and caress me, I looked in his face, and heavens!—it was my stepfather!

CHAPTER VI

SHE IS ASKED IN MARRIAGE

AT the appointed time I was at my aunt's next morning. Captain Butler and Will were there. We went to Richmond, and after we had arrived it rained for the rest of the day, but it was all one to me; indeed, I would rather have had it rain than sunshine, for it forced us to sit indoors, whilst Will, defying the rain, went out and left Captain Butler and me alone, which was just what I liked.

I will not catalogue these holiday trips; they made me feel as if I were living for the first time in all my life; they made me know that I was a girl with passions and tastes, yet easy to delight. I will not say that I enjoyed my liberty, because for years I had not known what restraint was; but I was sensible that my being able to go where I pleased and to do what I pleased was a prodigious privilege

at this time, when I had lost my heart, and must have gone mad had I been withheld from the society of the man who had it.

Two days before Will sailed my aunt called upon me. Our holiday rambles had run out; that day was to be blank, and I was not to see Captain Butler again until Thursday—it was a Thursday, I remember—when we were going down to the docks to see Will off. I remarked a peculiar look in my aunt's face, which prompted me, in my impetuous way, to say:

‘What's brought you here? What have you come to tell me? Now don't keep me waiting?’

‘Lor', my dear, one would need the breath of a healthy giant to keep pace with your impatience. Give me leave to rest a minute.’

‘All's well at home, I hope?’

‘Why, yes, of course, as well as it can be with a mother and father whose only child is leaving them, perhaps for ever, in a couple of days.’ Her eyes moistened. ‘But it is his wish, and it is his father's wish, and that must make it right—yes, that must make it right ;

though I'd have been grateful, very grateful, if it hadn't been the sea.' She wept for a few minutes, and I held my peace. Then drying her eyes with a resolved motion of the handkerchief, she said: 'You've been enjoying some lively days of late, Marian?'

'Happy days. Poor Will!' and now I felt as if I must cry, too.

'You're a strange creature, my dear. Whatever you do seems to me wrong. And yet, somehow, I can never satisfy my mind that your conduct's improper. I believe you'd be the same were your mother living. Your father might have held you in, but you'd have had your way with your poor mother.'

'What have I done?' said I, bridling up and flushing in the face.

'Nothing out of the ordinary,' she answered mildly. 'Of course, your going about so much with Captain Butler, often being alone with him, as Will has told us, is quite contrary to my ideas of good conduct. Do you want the man for a husband, Marian?'

I guessed by my temper that I looked hotly at her.

‘Do you, child, do you? You should answer me. If you do not answer me I will go, and I am sure that you will wish this house should be burnt down rather than that I should go.’

My temper went with this, and with it the blood out of my face.

‘What do you want me to say, aunt?’ I exclaimed in a faint voice.

‘Would you be content to marry Captain Butler?’

I looked down upon the ground and said softly :

‘I love him.’

‘He loves you. Do you know that?’

‘He has not told me so.’

‘He is a man of very gentlemanlike feelings, far above the average merchant sea-captain.’

‘Oh, don’t I know it!’ I cried.

‘Well, he loves you, and would be very glad to marry you. And I dare say he would,’ said my aunt, looking up and down my figure and then round the room, ‘but he’ll not offer marriage unless he is certain you’ll accept

him. He spent last evening with us, and had a very long and serious talk with your uncle and me on the subject. He declines to recognise your stepfather, which is quite proper under the circumstances, and regards me and your uncle as taking the place of your parents. Now, my dear, he is very much in love with you, and his diffidence comes from your being well off. We had a very long and serious talk, and I am here to have a serious talk with you, if not a long one.'

I felt that my face was lighted up ; I saw the reflection of its delight in her own placid expression. My heart bounded ; I could have danced and sung and waltzed about the room. I sat down, locking my hands tightly upon my lap, and listened with all the composure I could summon.

She informed me that Captain Butler had been exceedingly candid, had exactly named his savings and his patrimony, which scarcely amounted to three thousand pounds, and that he was deliberating whether or not to invest all that he had in a share of the new barque, *Arab Chief*. Mr. Johnstone had advised him,

supposing he should be so fortunate as to gain my consent to marry him, not to make me his wife until he had gone his first voyage and seen how his venture fell out.

‘Your uncle,’ said my aunt, ‘is strongly of opinion that a man has no business to go and marry a fine handsome young woman like you, then leave her after a week or a month, and not set eyes on her again till he returns home from round the world.’

‘I wish my uncle would mind his own business,’ said I, pouting, and feeling my face very long.

But my aunt insisted that my uncle was right. She added that Captain Butler cordially agreed with him. Captain Butler’s own wish was to betroth himself to me, then to make his voyage ; then return and marry me and carry me away with him to sea.

My eyes sparkled, and I jumped up and walked the room greatly excited. But after this my aunt grew tedious. Was it imaginable that any sort of love fit to base so solemn an affair as marriage upon could exist between two people who had known each other

a fortnight only? Here was I joyously avowing my love for Captain Butler and expressing the utmost eagerness to marry him. Did I know what I was talking about? Had I given a moment's reflection to what marrying a sailor signified? I was rich, young, and handsome; I had a fine house of my own; I had liberty and health; I was without children to tease me, to pale me with midnight watchings, to burden my spirits with anxiety for their future. Should I not be giving myself away very cheaply by marrying a sea-captain, a respectable, good-looking man certainly, but poor, following a calling in which no one can make any sort of figure, an underpaid, perilous, beggarly vocation? She did not deny that Captain Butler came from a highly respectable stock. He had mentioned two members of his family whom Mr. Johnstone perfectly well knew by name. His father had been in the Royal Navy and had served under Collingwood and Lord Exmouth and had died a poor lieutenant.

‘Oh, he’s a gentleman by birth,’ said my aunt, ‘and superior to his position. There’s

his calling, out of which, to be sure, he can get a living, so as to be independent of his wife, which must always be the first consideration with every man of spirit. And, then, you have plenty of money for both, and for as many as may come, should ever he find himself out of employment. But what do you know of each other? How can you tell that you will be able to live happily together? What! In a fortnight? Ridiculous! Why, I have lived one-and-twenty years with your uncle, and we don't even yet understand each other. You have by no means a sweet temper. But what time do you give the poor fellow to find you out in? And he may be quite a fiend himself, for all you know. It needs not much wig to hide a pair of horns. A tail will lie curled up out of sight under a fashionable coat, and your cloven hoof fits any shoe, my dear.'

So she chatted and teased and worried me with her advice and old-fashioned precepts. And then she angered me, and we quarrelled awhile, and afterwards cried and kissed. However, when her visit was ended, I had

promised her, in answer to her earnest, almost tearful entreaty, that, though I should consent to engage myself to Captain Butler, I would not marry him until he had returned from his next voyage, which, if he went to the West Indies and South America, would not keep him very long away from me, so that I should have plenty of time to judge of his character whilst he was ashore and abundance of leisure afterward to reflect upon my observations and prepare myself for the very greatest change that can befall a woman.

I did not see Captain Butler again until Thursday. In the brief interval I had made up my mind to accept him at once if he proposed. Oh, my few days of holiday association with him had filled my heart with a passion of love! Not my happiness only—my very life was in his power.

I went to my uncle's house on Thursday, early in the morning. We were to see poor Will off. We all tried to put on a cheerful air, and Will talked big of the presents he would bring home for his mother and me; but his mother's eyes were red with a night

of secret weeping; and whenever the lad's sight went to her face his mouth twitched and, if he was speaking, his voice trembled and broke. His father looked often at him.

Captain Butler met us at the docks. I guessed he witnessed in my looks that my aunt had spoken to me. He gazed at me fondly as he held my hand, but there was nothing of significance to be said between us at this time of sorrowful leave-taking. We went on board with Will. When I kissed the dear fellow, I broke down and wept; and then Mr. Johnstone led the way to the Brunswick Hotel, and we went upstairs to a room which commanded a view of the ship, and sat at a window watching her as she hauled out of dock.

By the time the ship had been towed out of sight past Greenwich Reach, it was hard upon one o'clock. My uncle had ordered some sandwiches and sherry as an excuse for us to sit and watch the ship. This was no entertainment for me, who had not partaken of it, indeed, and who had breakfasted but lightly early that morning. My uncle called

for the bill, and then rose to go. He told us he had an appointment which he would have barely time to keep. My aunt said to me :

‘What are you going to do?’ I returned no answer, for I had not made up my mind. ‘Come home with me, dear,’ said my aunt, ‘and dine with us at half-past two.’

I did not care to go home with her ; first, because I felt I should be losing sight of Captain Butler, and, next, because they were full of grief for the departure of their son ; so that my presence would be a sort of impertinence, whilst, again, I could not at all relish the prospect of a long and melancholy afternoon and evening spent in the neighbourhood of the Tower. So, after reflecting a minute or two, I said :

‘I’ll not go home with you, aunt. I’ll dine here and then take rail to Fenchurch Street and make my way to Hyde Park. A brisk walk will do me good. I feel as though I had lost a brother.’

‘I can’t stop,’ said my uncle, beginning to bustle.

My aunt saw how it was, and looked at me reproachfully.

‘I must return with your uncle,’ said she. ‘Are you to be left alone here? But what if you are? Your being alone about London and the neighbourhood is quite too much a habit with you, Marian—a practice I can’t approve. Which way do you go?’ she continued, looking at Captain Butler.

‘I’ll remain with Miss Johnstone, if she will suffer me to do so,’ he replied.

I smiled and coloured and bowed to him.

‘I can stop no longer,’ said my uncle, pulling out a great watch.

My aunt looked ‘hung in the wind,’ to use the phrase of the sailor, as though she understood she ought not to leave me alone with Captain Butler; but she correctly guessed that I did not want her; indeed, her remaining would have made me angry, and no doubt my fear of her intentions showed in my face.

‘Well,’ said she, ‘I could not leave you in better hands. Captain Butler will carefully look after you, I am sure.’ And she went

quickly after her husband, who would wait for her no longer.

Captain Butler rang the bell and ordered some dinner. I was to be his guest, he said.

‘But why, Miss Johnstone, do you wish to go all the way to Hyde Park?’

‘It is no wish. I’ll go wherever you please.’

‘We are close to Greenwich here. Shall we take a turn about Greenwich Park presently? The days are still short, and you are not so far from your house at Greenwich as you would be at Kensington.’

I consented, and then we stood at the window, looking at the scene of the river from the docks, talking about Will and the sea-life and such matters until dinner was ready. I longed to hear him say that he loved me. The language of his eye was not satisfying enough. I wanted him to take my hand and ask me to be his wife. I had thought my appetite good until I sat down, and then I could not eat. My heart beat fast. I felt my colour come and go. I was alone with the man that I loved. I seemed

to have lost my self-control, and behaved like a shy school-girl, and there were moments when I could have wished my aunt had not left us.

The waiter was slow, and it was nearly three o'clock before we rose. Captain Butler went to the window, looked out, and said to me: 'I am afraid this fine day is not going to last. There's a thickness gathering upon the river, and the sun looks like the rising moon. The afternoons are still short. Shall we hold Greenwich Park over for another day?'

'If you like.'

'How amiable you are! You give me my way in everything.'

'What shall we do?'

'Stop here for a little while, if you don't mind. We have this room to ourselves for the present.'

He took me by the hand. I trembled and sat down, and he seated himself beside me. Am I to repeat what he said—in what words he told me how great his love was for me—in what terms he asked me to be his

wife? All this I could unfold, ancient as it is in my memory. I could give it to you as though it were of yesterday's happening. But the black curtain still remains down on the memorable, the horrible, the tragical scene it is to rise upon soon, and I must not linger over such recollections as I am now dictating to my friend.

It was quite in keeping that I, a sailor's daughter, should be wooed and asked in marriage by a sailor in scenes full of shipping, within hearing of the cries and choruses of seamen and the hundred noises of the busy docks. A red mist lay upon the river, and the sun hung pale and rayless, like a great lemon, in the west. We were occupying a room that might have been the coffee-room. Several tables were draped and ready for guests, but we had been alone when my uncle and aunt left us, and we remained alone. He held me to him and kissed me; he looked proudly and gratefully at me and said that he loved me from the moment he had set eyes on me; that he thought me the handsomest woman he had ever seen in his

life ; that he adored me for my spirit—much more to this effect he said. But he told me he never would have had the heart to offer for my hand if he had not found some encouragement in my looks. Then he went over the long talk he'd had about me with Mr. and Mrs. Johnstone.

‘They begged,’ said he, ‘if you accepted me that we should not be married until my return from my next voyage.’

‘They are dear to me,’ said I, looking at him, ‘but they are not my guardians, and have no control over me.’

‘But they may be right, Marian, and they have a claim upon you too. I hope to do well next trip. I believe I shall do well enough,’ said he, smiling and smoothing the back of my hand, ‘to enable me to put something to your own fortune. I wish to be independent of you. You are not a woman to respect a man that is dependent upon you.’

‘My aunt was right,’ said I. ‘We don’t understand each other yet. Certainly you don’t understand me.’

He kissed me and said he knew what was in my mind, but all the same when he was my husband he wished to be independent of my fortune.

‘You shall have it all,’ I exclaimed, ‘and that will make you independent of me.’

‘Marian,’ said he gravely, ‘now that you have consented to be my wife I’ll tell you what I schemed; there would seem something unnatural in my going to sea and leaving my young bride behind me. I want you to be at my side when you are my wife. I do not know that I shall follow the sea much longer! A great deal will depend upon the issue of my next voyage. If I leave you behind, betrothed to me, you will have plenty of time to consider whether you, as a beauty and a fortune, have done wisely in accepting the hand of a plain merchant captain.

‘Don’t talk nonsense, Tom,’ said I, giving his name bluntly, and not at all relishing his sentimental fastidiousness, which I attributed to the influence of my uncle.

‘My dear girl, when we are married, we mean to live together happily, don’t we?’

‘That will depend upon you.’

‘It will depend upon us both, Marian. When a sailor carries a ship into unnavigated waters, if he is a good sailor, and does not mean to cast his ship away, he heaves the lead as he goes, warily sounds along every fathom of his road until he brings up in a safe anchorage. This is what you must do, and it’s for me to give you time to heave the lead, dear.’

‘You want time to heave it yourself, Tom.’

‘My darling,’ he cried, catching me to him, ‘I would marry you to-morrow.’

Presently, when we had composed ourselves, he said that he was going down to Sunderland next week, and would be away for about a week; and then he talked to me about purchasing a share in the new vessel, and seemed to want my advice. He named several instances of merchants who, having speculated in this way in shipping, had risen out of small beginnings into great opulence. He told me that he would be better off than most investors, inasmuch as he would have

command of his own venture, so to speak, be able to control things and push his business to the limits of all successful directions.

In this sort of conversation the afternoon passed away. At last, at about five o'clock, we were interrupted by a party of captains and others coming in to dine, on which Tom paid the bill and we left. He accompanied me to my house, and bade me farewell at the door, after arranging to call for me at eleven o'clock next morning.

CHAPTER VII

SHE PARTS WITH HER SWEETHEART

WELL, on the following week, my sweetheart went to Sunderland, and I felt as widowed as though I had been his wife and he had died. He crossed from Sunderland to Liverpool, and was absent a fortnight. From Liverpool he wrote to tell me that he was very well satisfied with the *Arab Chief*, and had agreed with her owners, who did business in Liverpool, to take command of her and purchase a share to the value of three thousand pounds.

The influence of his love was very strong upon me while he was away. He had hinted, but gently, that he thought my aunt right in objecting to my old love of rambling—I mean to the excursions I used to make down the river and to other parts, often sleeping out for a night or two at a time, as you have heard; and during his absence I went no-

where, save to my aunt's or to the houses of some of my particular friends.

Meanwhile you will not suppose that I saw nothing of Mr. Stanford. We lived in the same house, and were, therefore, bound to meet, not, indeed, in our separate apartments, but upon the staircase or in the passages. When Tom had been gone about a week, my stepfather knocked upon my door one morning as I sat at breakfast. I bade him enter, and he sat down at the table.

'I met Mrs. Johnstone yesterday,' said he, 'and she gave me a piece of news. Allow me to congratulate you,' and he inclined his head.

I bowed slightly in return, keeping silence.

'I am aware that I have no claim upon you, Miss Johnstone,' said he.

'None whatever,' I cried.

'But I am your stepfather, and, as a matter of courtesy, not to say more, you should, I think, have favoured me from your own lips with the news of your engagement.'

'My affairs have nothing to do with you, Mr. Stanford.'

'Miss Marian, I am not here to quarrel,

but to congratulate you,' he said. 'Our relations have long been uncomfortable. I should have quitted this house some time ago, but for the difficulty I find in meeting with one equally suitable. My practice is of the utmost importance to me not for my sake only; it is my duty to make a provision for your mother's child.'

'She is your child!' I cried, hotly.

'I do not need to be told that, Miss Marian. It is very painful to me to reflect that your antipathy should have no other basis than your lamented mother's love for me. Your mother, I hope and trust, was dear to you, Miss Marian, and it is most regrettable that there is nothing in her memory to soften your violent prejudice.'

'I beg you will not speak to me of my mother.'

He eyed me askant; he had a way of looking at you with his head half turned. 'I am here primarily to congratulate you,' said he. 'It is your pleasure to be reticent, and I will therefore not trouble you with any questions about your *fiancé*. But one inquiry

you will forgive—it is a matter of business. When, pray, are you to be married ?’

‘ I don’t know.’

‘ You will probably settle in this house with your husband ?’

‘ When he is my husband he shall live where he pleases, and I’ll live with him.’

‘ This end of London is not to everybody’s taste,’ he said, with an acid smile. ‘ It has occurred to me that your husband might wish to live in the west of the town. If so, I should be glad to arrange with him or with you to take this house off your hands.’

I answered coldly that I had no intention of parting with the house. It had belonged to my father, and whatever belonged to my father I held in veneration ; and this I said with so much bitterness that he rose, without another word, and left the room. I was glad to see his back. I cannot tell you how I hated the man.

Tom returned at about the expiration of a fortnight, and now I was one of the happiest of women. We were together day after day. We visited many old-fashioned resorts in the

neighbourhood of London, not one of which is probably now in existence. His influence did me a world of good. It was the most shaping, elevating, I had almost said, ennobling influence any girl could have come under. The power of his love over me was a godsend to such a character as mine. I had lived so uncontrolled a life, I was by nature so defiant, quick-tempered, and contemptuous of the opinion of others, that in many directions I did not really know the right thing to do. No mother could have more wisely directed her child than Tom governed me.

‘You are a rich garden,’ he would say, ‘but overrun; the sweets are too crowded, Marian, and here and there, my love, is a bit of snake-like habit that needs to be uncoiled from the beautiful plant it has got foul of.’

I well remember, soon after he returned from Liverpool, that he saw me to my house. It was six o’clock in the evening. I asked him to walk in.

‘No, dear,’ said he.

‘“No, dear!” Why not, Tom? You are tired and I am alone. Come in.’

‘It is because you are alone that I will not come in.’

‘I am always alone here,’ said I. ‘I live alone. You know that.’

‘Yes, I know that.’

‘And I am never to see you at my house because I am alone!’

‘Dearest, I will fetch you to-morrow at eleven, and then we can have a talk on the subject of men’s visits to their sweethearts who live alone.’

He pressed my hand and left me.

Next day he talked to me as he had promised. I listened with love and interest, though I secretly thought it no more than a sort of hair-splitting on the part of society to insist that a girl should not receive her sweetheart alone in her own house. I was alone with Tom now. I had been alone with him at the Brunswick Hotel. What was the difference between my being alone in the streets with him and my being with him at my rooms at home? Yet he said there was a difference, and, of course, he was right. I listened to him deferentially, with my head

hung. Had it been my aunt who uttered the opinions he delivered, I should have argued with her, flashed my most spirited looks upon her, flung from her, and, had it been possible, proved myself right by doing the very thing which she declared the world thought improper.

Friends who had known me earlier would have believed that love had taken the spirit out of me; but the truth was in Tom I had found my master. We were constantly together. Scarcely a day passed whilst he was in London without our meeting. I made him sit to a painter of miniature portraits in Regent Street, and the same artist took my likeness for my sweetheart to carry away to sea with him. They were both beautiful little pictures. My eyes seemed to glow out of the ivory, and Tom's face was to the life, happy, careless, loving.

It was settled by this time that we were to be married on his return. He hoped that he might not have to go to sea again after next voyage. If he went, he would take me with him. The scheme provided for my being at

his side, as his wife, in any case. But he owned that, though he had recommended a sea voyage to me, and though he had said he would take me as his wife to sea with him, he had far rather that I kept on dry ground. The sea was no place for woman. It was hurdled with perils. It was a ceaseless jump of risks from one port to another. Here, then, was one reason for our not being married until he returned.

But another and more controlling one, though he never betrayed it in words, was his desire that I should have plenty of leisure to reflect upon the step I had consented to take. I could not now but see things as he did, and, indeed, I hope I could never have been so unmaidenly as to give the smallest expression to my secret wishes ; but in my heart of hearts I was more vexed than I can express by this delay, which I attributed largely to my uncle's influence with Tom. When two people are in love, and are to be married, there will be impatience. Whether the man or the woman is or should be the more impatient, I don't know. I own that

deep in my heart I was bitterly impatient. Tom would not sail till August; we had plenty of time to get married in; several months must pass before he could return, and, like a child, I wanted my toy at once. I wanted to feel that he belonged to me; that, though he was absent, an invisible bond united us. I was jealous of him. I said to myself: At the place he is sailing to he may meet with some woman whom he will think fairer and discover to be richer than I. Are not sailors faithless? All the songs and stories about them represent them so. Then I thought of my father, and abhorred myself for being visited with such thoughts, and cried like a fool to think how mean was my heart, that loving, nay, I may say adoring my Tom as I did, I could yet suppose when out of sight he would forget me.

Well, the time came round when the *Arab Chief* was nearly ready, and when my sweetheart must go to Sunderland to carry her to the Mersey, there to load for Rio Janeiro. I never could understand business, least of all the business of the sea, and would listen to

him whilst he talked about his venture, vainly endeavouring to grasp his meaning in the full. But I gathered from his conversations with my uncle that he was very sanguine, and that, in any case, there could be no risks, as he had taken care to insure considerably in excess of his stake. I recollect, on one occasion, when we were dining at my aunt's, my uncle, in talking with Tom about his venture, suggested that he erred by insuring so high above the value of the risk.

‘But why?’ said Tom. ‘At all events, I pay handsomely for the privilege of protecting myself up to the hilt.’

‘True,’ said the lawyer, ‘but always in case of loss there is something in over-insurance that vitiates—perhaps to one's prejudice only, mind—the well-seeming of this act of self-protection.’

‘The underwriters have it in their power to satisfy themselves,’ said Tom.

‘What are your firms?’ asked my uncle.

‘The Marine, the Alliance, and the General Maritime Insurance.’

‘That’s cover enough, captain,’ said my uncle, laughing.

‘Yes, and I mean to go to the Neptune for a policy on the freight. I have a considerable share in the barque, and I intend that my proportion of the freight shall be safe. I am not of those who believe in keeping their money in a purse; I carry mine in my pockets. If the purse is lost, all is gone. Who’s to assure me of the solvency of an insurance office? I mean that this voyage shall enable me to stay at home with my wife,’ said he, looking fondly at me. ‘Let another take charge of the barque next time. I’ll make enough to own the half of her.’

‘You shall own all of her, if you will, Tom,’ said I.

‘That’s as your trustees shall decide,’ said my uncle.

‘My money is my own, and I shall do what I please with it,’ I answered.

‘Yes; and with your knowledge of business, Marian, you shall go into partnership with your husband as a shipowner and land the firm in the Fleet.’

Here Tom sang :

‘ All in the Downs the Fleet lay moored,’

and so with a laugh changed the subject.

It was towards the close of the month of August when my sweetheart bade me farewell on his departure to Liverpool to take command of the *Arab Chief*. I had passionately desired to go with him ; but my aunt could not accompany me, and I was without a friend of my own sex able just then to leave home. My wish was overruled by my uncle and aunt. Tom himself did not favour it, though his longing for me to be with him to the last was as keen as mine, and so I took my farewell of him in my uncle’s home. He held me in his arms whilst I cried till I thought my heart would break. He kissed me again and again, bade me keep up my spirits, to consider that that day a year I should have been his wife some months. He begged me to remain faithful to him, and told me there never would be a minute when I should be out of his thoughts ; and solemnly asking God to look down upon me, to guard me against all evil and sickness, to look down

upon him, to protect and bring him back in safety to me, he pressed a last lingering kiss upon my lips and left me alone with my tears and my memories.

I received several letters from him whilst he was at Liverpool. He wrote in good spirits, called his ship a beauty, and said that of her kind she was the most admired of anything that had been seen in the Mersey for years. There was but one drawback. The mate of the barque was a Mr. Samuel Rotch. Tom had met this man some five or six years before in South America, and had had an unpleasantness with him there. He did not tell me what that trouble was. Afterwards Rotch had served under him, and there was a further difficulty.

Mr. Rotch, he said, was a man of his own age, soured by professional disappointments, but a shrewd, intelligent person, and an excellent seaman. He had rather that the owners had appointed any other man as mate. But he believed that there was some sort of distant relationship between Rotch and one of the firm; and as the man had once before

got into trouble in consequence of his representations, and was poor, with a wife and two children to support, he had resolved to leave matters as he found them.

I showed this letter to my uncle, and asked him if he thought that Mr. Rotch had it in his power to make Tom unhappy or the voyage uncomfortable. He laughed, and answered :

‘ Your Tom will have gone to sea with irons and bilboes, depend on ’t. Do you know that the power of the shipmaster when at sea is greater than that of any despot in the world, from the czar down to the shirt-maker’s sweater? I have always contended that legally the master mariner is much too much empowered. He can flog, he can starve, he can iron the devils under him, and justify any atrocity by an entry in the log-book and the testimony of one or two witnesses who would poison their mothers for a bottle of rum. How, then, should this Mr. Samuel Rotch be able to disturb the peace of your sweetheart? Your anxiety puts the boot on the wrong leg, my dear. It is for Mrs. Rotch to be uneasy.’

The next letter I received from Tom was dated at sea a few leagues from the Scilly Islands. He had brought his topsail to the mast, he wrote, to send his letter by a little coasting schooner that was inward bound. He blessed me, and sent me many messages of love, and wrote in high spirits of his ship and crew. Rotch was very civil and alert, he said, his crew as willing and active a body of men as ever he had had charge of, and his barque was a clipper, the swiftest fabric that was ever bowed by a breeze of wind.

‘I don’t mean to spare her,’ he wrote, ‘and she knows it. If there’s virtue in sail-cloth, my beloved, she shall walk. She shall whiten old ocean for your sake, my darling, though it should come to my holding on with my royals when we ought to be under double reefs.’

I laughed when I read his sea-terms, for I understood them; yet I pouted, too, for I was fool enough to feel jealous of his admiration for his barque. He ought to admire nothing living or dead but me, I thought to myself. He may go and fall in love with his ship, and

think her mistress enough for him, and then I kissed his letter and read it again and yet again, and counted how many days had gone since he had left me, and how many weeks must pass before he would return.

Much about this time aunt received a letter from her son Will. This, too, was addressed from sea. We had heard from him from Plymouth—a few brief lines—and not since. He wrote that they had met with fearful weather in the Channel, and he believed that he had mistaken his calling; he would swap all his fine notions of starting on a career and seeing the world for one hour of the comfortable parlour near the Tower and a good dinner of roast beef and cauliflower.

‘It’s a dog’s life,’ said he. ‘The captain is stern and like a sentry. You mustn’t speak to him. The second mate is a bit of a bully, big, strong, and noisy. You never saw such beef as they serve out in all your life! The oldest sailor on board swears he never recollects worse pork, and they say that before we’re up with the Cape the bread for ship’s use will be all alive—oh!’

‘All first voyagers write like that,’ said my uncle, returning the letter to his wife ; ‘before Will is a fortnight at home he’ll be making our lives a burden with his regrets and lamentations that his ship doesn’t sail sooner.’

CHAPTER VIII

SHE RECEIVES DREADFUL NEWS

THE weeks went by. Day after day I eagerly expected to receive a letter from Tom, making sure that he would grasp every chance to send me his love and blessing and all the news about himself from those high seas on which he was still afloat. But no letter reached me, 'simply because,' Mr. Johnstone explained, 'your Tom has not been fortunate enough to fall in with a homeward-bound ship. You may often sail for many days upon the sea, so I've heard your father say, without sighting a vessel. When you hear from Tom it will be from Rio.'

But how I missed him! We had been incessantly together for nearly four months. The weeks might roll by, but there was no magic in the time they contained to weaken my sense of loss. I lived very quietly, was

much in my own home, where I sought to pass the hours by reading and drawing. I took a kind of dislike to company, and refused a number of invitations to quadrille and card parties and the like. It was my delight to shape my conduct and habits by the fancy of such wishes as I knew my sweetheart would express were he with me. My memory of him, my love for him, lay in a spirit of control upon my heart. All impulse, all desire was governed by the many gentle, noble counsels he had wrapped up in our long, sweet, quiet talks together, when we rambled in the outskirts or took oars upon the river. Never was man more truly loved than was Tom. My aunt particularly noticed the change in me, and said that Tom's courtship had done me a very great deal of good.

‘You no longer roll your eyes,’ said she, ‘when you argue, and redden and strut and heave up your breast when I venture to object to your views. You have become thoroughly genteel, my dear, in your tastes and habits. Your captain will have a treasure in you. And it is very well that you did not

marry him before he sailed, for I am certain that his influence as a husband would not have been so considerable as it has proved as a lover. Both he and you are now having plenty of leisure for thought, and when you come together at the altar you will know exactly what you are doing.'

In the month of November my little step-sister died of peritonitis. I offered to nurse her when it reached my ears that she was ill in bed. Mr. Stanford thanked me; and whilst I nursed her I learned to love the poor little delicate creature, and my heart reproached me for the unconquerable coldness I had ever felt towards her when I stooped and kissed her white face in death and beheld a faint copy of my mother there. I cannot tell to what degree Mr. Stanford was affected by his loss; his colourless countenance betrayed but little of what might pass in his mind. Had I found his grief very great, then the loneliness of his state would have pleaded, and I might have forced myself into some show of civility. But there was nothing in his behaviour after his child's death to appeal,

and we speedily passed again into our old cold relations of separate existence and fixed dislike of him on my side as a fellow who had impudently thrust himself into my father's place.

The nursing of the poor child, however, together with my grief at her death and my secret fretting over not hearing from Tom, made me look ill if I did not feel so. My aunt was concerned and insisted upon my seeing her medical adviser, who recommended her, spite of its being winter, to take me to the seaside. It was the month of February—hard, cold weather. My aunt knew and liked Ramsgate, and proposed that town. Thither we went and took lodgings in Wellington Crescent, a pleasant row of buildings immediately overlooking the English Channel.

After we had been in Ramsgate a few days I felt so poorly that I was obliged to keep my bed. My aunt called in a doctor, who said that I was 'out.' He sent me physic, which I did not take, and told me to keep my bed till I felt equal to rising. My bed was so situated that, when my blind was

up, I saw the ocean. If the day was clear, I could faintly spy afar upon the horizon the delicate golden thread of the Goodwin Sands. I'd watch the ships slowly floating past this side of the thin line like little clouds of powder-smoke gliding ball-shaped from the mouths of cannon, and listen to the faint thunder of the surf combing the beach under the chalk cliffs, and find a meaning for the voice of the wind as it shrilled with a hissing as of steam past the casement, or sang in the interstices or muttered in the chimney. The sight of the sea brought Tom very close to me, closer than ever he could lie upon my heart at home, amid streets and the rattle of coaches and carts.

One morning, whilst I was confined to my bed, my aunt did not come to my room as was her custom after breakfast. I inquired of the servant how she was, and was told that she was pretty well, but that she had passed an uneasy night. I asked if there were any letters, for I was always expecting to hear from Tom under cover from my maid, whom I had left at home ; the girl replied that Mrs.

Johnstone had received one letter, and that there was none for me.

It was not until after twelve that my aunt came to see me. She looked ill, and there was a peculiar expression of distress in her face. She came to the foot of my bed and gazed at me earnestly, and asked me how I felt. I said that I felt better, and hoped to find strength to rise for a few hours towards evening.

‘You are not looking well, aunt.’

‘I am not feeling well, Marian.’

‘I hope you have not received bad news from home?’

‘I have had a broken night,’ said she, turning away and going to the window, and speaking with her back upon me.

‘Have you news of Will?’

‘No! No!’ she cried quickly, still with her back turned. ‘There is no news of Will. I believe you are better, my dear.’

And then she asked me what I could fancy for dinner, and so changed the subject with a readiness which quieted the misgiving her looks had excited.

She came and went during the day, as she had heretofore done; but she was more silent, more reserved than usual, and often her eyes rested upon me, though she shifted her gaze when I looked at her. I rose in the afternoon, but in a few hours was glad to get to bed again. Next day I felt decidedly better and stronger. It was a bright, still day, cloudless, and the sun lay warm upon the land, and the sea stretched like a polished plate of steel, full of gleams of different shades of blue. I went down to the pier in an old-fashioned, rickety chair, and my aunt walked by my side. The harbour was gay with the red canvas of smacks. A number of ships, of many rigs, lay close in against the wall, and their white canvas hung motionless in festoons, drying after the rain or dew of the night. The sweet, salt, still atmosphere was refreshing to one's innermost life. All sounds came in a sort of music from the town, and I heard a gay ringing of church bells as for a marriage; the tones, silvered to the ear by distance, mingled pleasantly with the noise

of the foaming of the strong tide racing off the rounded base of the pier.

I said to aunt: 'When Tom and I are married, we shall often come to Ramsgate, and perhaps live here. I do not wonder that you like the place.'

In silence she stepped to the side of the pier, and seemed to look earnestly at the figure of a smack that had dropped her anchor about a mile off, her brown sails hoisted, and the image under her as perfect as a mirror could reflect it. When she returned to my side, she spoke of the beauty of the day and the difference between the air of Stepney and that of Ramsgate, and we then leisurely returned to our lodgings.

I was sure that some trouble weighed upon her mind; but as my questions seemed to make her peevish, as her worry might relate to something which she would wish to conceal from me, I forbore further inquiry. That day passed, and next day I was well enough to rise after breakfast and go into the drawing-room, where I sat upon a sofa wheeled close to the window. I was reading

a novel, which my aunt had borrowed from the Marine Library, and had wholly forgotten myself in the interest of the story. My aunt had been absent for at least an hour. I believed she was out shopping. She entered without her bonnet, and coming to the sofa, sat down, took me by the hand and looked me in the face. The tears gushed into her eyes suddenly, and for a few moments she moved her lips in a vain effort to speak. She then said :

‘I dare not conceal it longer from you, Marian. But, oh, what news it is! How am I to break it to you?’

I threw the book down. The neck of my dress seemed to strangle me. Mechanically I removed my brooch and eased the tension of my neck with my finger whilst I looked at her.

‘It concerns Tom,’ she said.

‘Is he dead?’ said I, speaking with a heightened note in my voice that carried it out of recognition of my own hearing.

‘No.’

‘Is it very bad news?’

‘Marian,’ she said, beginning to cry again, ‘it is shocking bad news. It is incredible. It may all come right, but it is not the less terrible.’

I drew in several deep breaths, and said: ‘Why will you not tell me this dreadful news of Tom?’

‘He is in London.’

‘In London!’ I shrieked, springing to my feet.

She pulled me gently to the sofa, and putting her hand in her pocket, drew forth a letter.

‘Your health would not allow me to speak to you before,’ said she in a broken voice. ‘Even now I fear that I am in too great a hurry. But what am I to do? You would not thank me for any longer concealing the truth. Tom is in prison, Marian.’

I stared at her and shivered.

‘Your uncle’s letter,’ she continued, opening it with both hands which trembled excessively, ‘will better explain what has happened than I can. Will you read it?’

I took it. The handwriting reeled. I returned the letter to her and said :

‘Read it to me, aunt.’

She did so. It was to this effect. After all these years I am unable to give it you word for word :

‘I have a terrible piece of news to convey to poor Marian through you. Captain Butler is arrived in London, having been sent home by the British Consul at Rio in H.M.S. *Crusader*. He is charged by the mate and carpenter of the *Arab Chief* with attempting to scuttle her. These two men, together with two sailors belonging to the crew of the *Arab Chief*, are landed with him from the *Crusader*. He instantly sent for me, but I wish there were not so many witnesses against him. That he is absolutely innocent, and that he is the victim of an atrocious conspiracy, I have not the shadow of a doubt. He will be charged at Bow Street on Monday, and will be advised to reserve his defence. He will be committed, of course, to take his trial at the Old Bailey, and we must hope to come off with flying colours. But I say again I could wish there

were fewer witnesses. Four to one are fearful odds.'

My aunt had read thus far when a flash of lightning seemed to pass over my eyes, and I remembered no more.

I recovered from a fit rather than a swoon. I had been for above an hour unconscious, and found myself on my bed, with the doctor on one hand of me and my aunt on the other. The doctor went away soon after I had regained my mind. Memory was slow in coming. It rushed in upon me on a sudden with its burden of horror.

'What are you going to do, Marian?'

'I am going to London.'

'Lie still, my dear child. You cannot go to London to-day. I'll book by the coach to-morrow morning. I'll write to your uncle and send the letter to Canterbury to catch the Dover mail-coach. He will be ready to receive us and give us all the news.'

And, indeed, I should have found myself too weak in body to carry out my resolution to go at once to London. The railway to Ramsgate was not then made. I do not know

that it was even in contemplation. A coach left early for London from Ramsgate every morning; it carried the mails, I think, and travelled by way of Canterbury. When my aunt found me somewhat composed, she went to the office to secure places by the coach on the morrow. She left me her husband's letter, and I read it again and again, and every time I read it I rolled my eyes around the room, seeking to realise that I was awake.

There was something shocking and frightful to me in my uncle speaking of the Old Bailey; I associated it with Newgate Prison. Living in the City as I did, well did I know the grim, dark, massive walls of that horrid jail. Would Tom be locked up in that prison which I could not think of without a sickening fancy of the executions there—of the remorseless human beasts, men and women white with gin, gaping with the lust of blood, gathered together to witness the sight—of the filthy tenements round about, every window pale with the eager faces of cowards and devils, the grimy roofs littered with sight-seers? What was Tom charged with? What

was the meaning of scuttling a ship? What punishment was the act visited with? Was a man hanged for scuttling?

I paced about the room in the agony of my mind till I sank with exhaustion into a chair. I dug the nails of my fingers into my palms till the blood sprang. Tom in prison! The gentlest, the tenderest, the truest, the most honourable of men charged with a dreadful crime, a hanging crime perhaps, and locked up in jail!

CHAPTER IX

SHE VISITS NEWGATE

IT blew almost a hurricane of wind that night. It swept out of the east and stormed in thunder against the house in which we lodged. The rain burst in furious discharges upon the window-panes, and the lightning was sun-bright at times, and the noise of the rushing sea was a continuous artillery which drowned the loud peals from the clouds. All night long I lay awake with wide-open eyes. Thrice my aunt visited my bedside to see how I did and every time I could give her no other, answer than that the thought of my sweetheart lying in prison was driving me mad, was killing me ; so I would rave. I could think of nothing but Tom. I had no sight for the lightning, no ear for the thunder of the gale, nor for the voice of the sea in its wrath.

It was clear weather next morning. We breakfasted very early, walked to the coach, and quitted Ramsgate at about eight o'clock. It was a dreadful journey to me; endless as the night to one who is shipwrecked and watches for the dawn. The weather had changed too; snow was falling at Canterbury and it was bitterly cold all the way to London. We reached my uncle's house at ten o'clock that night. My aunt's letter had been received, and a cheerful fire and a hot, comfortable supper awaited us. My uncle came down-stairs to receive us and kissed us both in silence, as though some one dear to us all lay dead upstairs. Exhausted as I was by the long journey, by the cold, by the dreadful sufferings of my mind, I would still insist on hearing of Tom, on learning how he was, how he looked, the meaning of this dreadful thing which had befallen him and me, before I sat or took a bite or stirred a foot to the bedroom to remove my travelling attire. But my uncle was inflexible.

'Go with your aunt,' he exclaimed; 'then return with her here and warm and refresh

yourself. I cannot talk rationally with one who looks half dead.'

He forced me to obey, but I made haste to rejoin him. He placed me close to the fire and gave me some hot brandy and water and a biscuit, which he said would act as a stay till supper was served, and, my aunt arriving, he began to talk about Tom.

'He is charged—did I not write it?—with attempting to scuttle his ship.'

'Why should he do that?' I cried.

'To defraud the insurance offices. I told him at the time that he erred by over-insuring, but it seems that he went further even than he admitted, for he put a venture of cargo of his own into the vessel and insured the goods and the freight in the Neptune. Four offices!' he exclaimed, and he broke off, looking down with a very grave face.

'Where is he?' I cried.

'In Newgate,' he answered.

'Oh, don't tell me that!' I shrieked, clasping my hands and rocking myself.

My aunt stared with a white face at her husband.

‘Now, Marian,’ said my uncle, ‘if you possess one particle of the spirit of your father, let it animate and support you now—now, and until this tragic affair is at an end. Screams and lamentations are not going to help Captain Butler. He says that he is the victim of a diabolical conspiracy. I believe it, and it will be our duty to prove it. What is there about Newgate more than there is about Millbank or the Hulks or Horsemonger Lane to horrify you?’

‘Why is he in Newgate?’ asked my aunt.

‘He was charged, yesterday, at Bow Street, and committed to take his trial at the Central Criminal Court. That’s why. There is nothing in it. Many innocent men have been locked up in Newgate.’

‘Who charges him with this crime?’ said I.

‘His mate, a man of the name of Rotch, and a carpenter, a drunken rascal, of the name of Nodder.’

And then he related the story of the accusation, and described what had passed at Bow Street on the preceding day.

Supper was served, and the presence of the servant held us silent. I could not look at the food I was helped to, and was passionately craving for the servant to be gone that I might question my uncle. Then, when the opportunity came, I said to him :

‘Is scuttling a ship a serious crime?’

‘One of the most serious.’

I trembled and said :

‘What is the punishment for it?’

He was silent, as though he did not or would not hear. I sprang up and shrieked out :

‘Uncle, is it hanging?’

‘It would have been hanging two or three years ago,’ said he. ‘Thank God, it is no longer a capital crime.’

‘What can they do to Tom?’ I cried.

‘Control yourself, my dear child,’ said my aunt.

‘Oh, uncle, what can they do to him?’ I cried again.

‘They must first prove him guilty.’

‘And then—and then?’

‘The penalty is transportation.’

‘He may be sent out of the country?’

‘Yes, to Norfolk Island or Tasmania or Botany Bay,’ answered my uncle, in a voice sullen with his sympathy with my misery.

‘For how long?’

‘You’ll drive yourself mad with these questions,’ said my aunt. ‘He is not yet convicted.’

‘For how long, uncle?’

‘For a term—perhaps for life. But he is innocent, and we must prove him so.’

I flung myself into an arm-chair and buried my face. Yet I could not weep; I had cried away all my tears. But, oh, the torment in my half-strangled throat, and the anguish of my dry, heart-breaking sobs!

After a while, I succeeded in forcing a sort of composure upon myself. We sat talking until long past midnight. I asked many questions as rationally and as collectedly as I could; but I remarked, with secret horror, in my uncle’s speech a note of misgiving that sank into my spirits like a knife into the heart. Indeed, it seemed more than misgiving, even dark suspicion in him.

He said not a word to justify what I felt ; but he talked of four to one, and again he talked of Tom's exaggerated precaution in excessively insuring his venture, and I guessed what was in his mind.

‘We shall be able to score one good point,’ said he. ‘The mate Rotch, some five or six years ago, quarrelled with your sweetheart Tom, at Valparaiso. Butler was then mate of a ship. They met at a fandango. Rotch insulted a young lady Butler had been dancing with and had previously known. Your sweetheart took him by the throat and backed him out of the room, half suffocated and black in the face. Strangely enough, two years later, Butler found himself master of a small Indiaman, called the *Chanticleer*, with this same man Rotch as second mate under him. The mate of the *Chanticleer* complained much of Rotch's insolence. One night, when in Soundings, homeward bound, Butler found Rotch sleeping in his watch, with a dozen ships looming dark all round. This was extraordinary. Butler reported his conduct to the owners of the *Chanticleer*, and the man

lost his berth. But on your sweetheart learning that Rotch had been married shortly before sailing, and that a child had been born to him during his absence at sea, he went to work to procure his reinstatement or to obtain another situation for him, and was successful. There may be other motives; but here is a point that must go far to confirm Butler's declaration that he is the victim of a conspiracy.'

I listened greedily. I kept my eyes, smarting and burning, fastened upon my uncle's face.

'What is scuttling a ship?' I asked.

'Did I not explain? It is boring a hole in her so that she may sink.'

'Who says that Tom bored a hole in his ship?'

'Rotch and Nodder and two seamen.'

'Did they see him bore the hole?'

'They affirm that they saw the holes which he had bored, and discovered a tree-nail auger in his cabin.'

'Oh, he would not do it!' I cried. 'It is a lie! He is innocent!'

Here my aunt advised me to go to bed, and said that she herself could sit up no longer. But I detained my uncle for another half hour with many feverish, impassioned questions, before I could force myself from the room, and a church bell struck one through the stillness of the snowing night as I went to the bedroom that had been prepared for me.

My uncle was to see Tom next morning at Newgate, and told me he would inquire the rules and bring about a meeting between my sweetheart and me as speedily as possible. After breakfast, my box was put into a coach, and I drove to my house in Stepney. Mr. Stanford came into the hall to speak to me. I forced a wild smile and a hurried bow and pushed past. I could not address him nor listen to what he had to say. When I went upstairs and sat down in my own room, the room in which Tom and Will had dined with me, where I had passed hours in sweet musings upon my lover, where there were many little things he had given me—a picture I had admired, a screen, a little French chimney

clock, above all, his miniature—I believed my heart was breaking. I wept and wept; I could not stay my tears. My maid stood beside me, caressed and tried to control me, then drew off and stood looking at me, afraid.

By-and-by I rallied, and since activity was life to me—for sitting still and thinking were heart-breaking and soul-withering to one situated as I was, without a father or a mother to carry her grief to, without an intimate friend to open herself to—I considered what I should do; and then I reflected that all the money which I could scrape together might be needful for Tom's defence. Thereupon I went straight to the bank into which my trustees paid my money, and ascertained how my account stood. I saw the manager of the bank and asked him to what amount he would allow me to overdraw, should the need arise, and he told me that I was at liberty to overdraw to a considerable sum against the security of the title-deeds of my house, which were in his possession, and which had been originally lodged at the bank by my father.

This and other errands I went upon helped

to kill the day, and the distraction did me a little good. In the afternoon, before it was dusk, I walked as far as Ludgate Hill, and turned into the Old Bailey, and went a little distance up Newgate Street, and continued walking there that I might be near Tom. I crossed the street and looked at the horrible walls, dark with the grime of London, and at the spiked gates, and at a huddle of miserable, tattered wretches at one of those gates, as though they yearned in their starvation and misery for the prison food and the shelter of the cells within; and I wondered in what part behind those fortress-like walls my sweetheart was, what his thoughts were, what he was doing, if he was thinking of me as I was of him, until I stamped the pavement in a sudden agony of mind, and crossed the street to the walls, and went along the pavement close beside them, to and fro, to and fro.

The dusk drove me away at last, and being very weary, I called a coach and went to my aunt's, that I might get the latest news of Tom. My uncle had had a long interview with my sweetheart in the morning.

‘He is fairly cheerful and hopeful,’ said he. ‘You will scarcely know him, though. His anxiety during the long voyage home in the man-of-war has pinched and wrinkled and shrunk him. You’ll see him to-morrow. We will go together.’

‘Uncle, you will employ the very best people on his side.’ He named a well-known Old Bailey pleader of those days. ‘Do not stint in money, uncle. All that I have in the world is Tom’s,’ I said.

‘The deuce of it is,’ exclaimed my uncle, thumping his knee, ‘we have no witnesses to call except as to character. It’s four-tongued positive swearing on one side, and single-tongued negative swearing on the other.’

So ran our talk. It was all about Tom. As on the previous evening so now again I kept my kind-hearted uncle up till past midnight with my feverish questions. My aunt had asked me to sleep in their house, and I gladly consented, partly that I might be instantly ready to accompany my uncle to Newgate at the appointed time, and partly because I dreaded the loneliness of my home,

the long and dismal solitude of the evening and the night in a scene crowded with memories of my father and my mother and my sweetheart, of my childhood, of the sunny hours of my holiday rambling and of careless merry days of independence. I could not sleep, through thinking of the morrow's meeting. It was seven months since Tom and I had kissed and parted. He had sailed away full of hope. He had written in high spirits. And now he was a prisoner in Newgate; his ship taken from him; the prospects of the voyage ruined; his innocent, manly heart infamously shamed and degraded, charged with a crime which might banish him for ever from England!

'Do not be shocked,' said my uncle, in the morning, 'because you will not be suffered to speak to him face to face. You will presently see what I mean. It is mere prison routine—a quite necessary discipline. There's nothing in it.'

After all these years I but vaguely remember as much of this horrible jail as we traversed. My heart beat with a pulse of

fever; my sight fell dim in the gloom after the whiteness of the day outside. I seemed to see nothing, but I looked always for my sweetheart as we advanced. I recollect little more than the door of Newgate jail, with its flanking of huge, black, fortress-like wall, the iron-grated windows, the heavy, open doors faced with iron, the dark passages, in one of which hung an oil lamp, and the strange sight beyond this gloomy passage of stone floor touched with barred sunlight flowing through an iron grating. Many structural changes have been made in the interior of Newgate since those days. We entered a passage walled on either hand by gratings and wirework. Some warders in high hats and blue coats—warders or constables, I know not which—stood outside this passage. My uncle was at my side, and we waited for my sweetheart to appear. There was but one prisoner then present. He was conversing through the grating with a dark-skinned, black-eyed woman of about forty, immensely stout and dressed in many bright colours. He was clothed in the garb of the felon, and was enormously thick-set

and powerfully built; you saw the muscles of his arms tighten the sleeves of his jacket as he gesticulated with Hebraic demonstrativeness to the woman whose voice was as harsh as a parrot's. His hair was cropped close; where his whiskers and beard were shaved his skin was a dark coarse blue; he was deeply pitted with small-pox; his nose lay somewhat flat upon his face with very thick nostrils; his brows were black and heavily thatched, and the eyes they protected were coal black as the Indian's, but amazingly darting. My uncle looked at him with interest, and whispered:

'I was at that man's trial. He was sentenced to the hulks and to transportation for life for receiving stolen goods and keeping a notorious house. He is a Jew prize-fighter, and one of the very best that ever stood up in a ring. Three years ago he beat the Scotch champion Sandy Toomer into pulp. He's a terrible ruffian, and a villain of the deepest dye, but a noble prize-fighter, and I am sorry for Barney Abram.'

The felon took no notice of us spite of my

uncle staring at him, as though he had been one of the greatest of living men. I glanced at the horrid creature, but thought only of Tom.

I was glad of the delay in his coming. I had time to collect myself and to force an expression of calmness into my face. On a sudden he appeared! He came in by the side of a warder from the direction of a yard, in which my uncle afterwards told me prisoners who had not yet had their trials took the air. He was dressed in his own clothes, in seafaring apparel somewhat soiled by wear. I had feared to see him in the vile attire of a convict, and was spared a dreadful shock, when I looked and beheld my dear one as I remembered him! But oh! not as I remembered him! He had let his beard grow; he was shaggy and scarce recognisable with it, and his hair was longer than formerly. His cheeks were sunk, his eyes dull, like the eyes of one who has not slept for weeks, his lips pale, his complexion strange and hardly describable, owing to the pallor that had sifted through, so to speak,

and mottled the sun-brown of his skin. But his old beauty was there to my love; my heart gave a great leap when I saw him; and I cried his name and extended my arms against the wire of the grating.

He looked at me steadfastly for some moments with his teeth hard set upon his under lip, as though he dared not attempt to speak until he had conquered his emotion and mastered such tears as burn like fire in the brain of a man. My uncle gently saluted him through the bars, and then motioned with his hand, and, taking me by the arm, led me down to the extremity of this jail meeting-place, and Tom walked on the opposite side until he was abreast. My uncle then moved some distance away and stood watching the Jew prize-fighter. A warder walked leisurely to and fro; and others at a little distance stood like sentinels.

My sweetheart's first words were:

‘Marian, before God I am innocent.’

‘Tom, I know it—I know it, dearest, and your innocence shall be proved.’

‘Before God I am innocent,’ he repeated

softly and without passion in his tones or posture. 'It is a devilish plot of Rotch to ruin me. I don't know why the carpenter Nodder should swear against me. I had no quarrel with the man. But he'd go to the gallows for drink, and in that Rotch found his opportunity since he needed a witness.'

'You will be able to prove your innocence.'

'Rotch,' he continued, still speaking softly and without temper, 'bored holes in the lazarette; then plugged the lining and hid the auger in my cabin. Nodder swears that I borrowed the auger from him. A lie, Marian—a wicked, horrible lie. Why should I borrow an auger? Why should I, as captain, handle such a tool as that when there is a carpenter in the ship? Rotch brought some of the men aft to listen to the water running into the lazarette. He says that he went below to break out stores and heard it. A hellish lie, Marian. He swears that he plugged the holes to stop the leaks and came up with the men to search my cabin. I was in my cabin when they entered, and on the scoun-

drel Rotch charging me with attempting to scuttle the barque and imperilling the lives of the crew, I pulled a pistol out of my drawer and would have shot him. They threw themselves upon me, and Rotch called to them to search the cabin, and they found the auger in the place where the villain had hidden it. But this was not all. Rotch swore before the Consul at Rio that he had seen me go into the lazarette, and that he had mentioned the circumstance to Nodder, but that neither suspected what I was doing until Rotch himself went below for some boatswain's stores, and then he heard the water running in. Marian,' and here he slightly raised his voice, 'it is a conspiracy, artfully planned, artfully executed, artfully related, with the accursed accident of the over-insured venture to make it significant as death, and God alone knows how it may go with me.'

A warder paused and looked at us, then passed on.

'Don't say that,' I cried; 'it breaks my heart to hear you say that. You are innocent. My uncle will employ clever men. They will

question and question and prove the wretches liars, and our turn will come.'

'I blundered by over-insuring, but I blundered more fearfully still when in a moment of confidence I told the villain Rotch what money I had embarked in this voyage, and to what extent I had protected myself.'

'Tom, whatever happens I am with you. Oh, if it should come to their killing you they shall kill me too, Tom.'

He pressed his hands to his heart and then sobbed twice or thrice. My love, my grief, my misery raged in me; I felt that I had strength to tear down the strong iron grating which separated us, that I might get to him, clasp him to me, give him the comfort of my bosom, the tenderness of my caressing cheek. It worked like madness in my soul to be held apart from him, to see him and not be able to fling my arms around him.

We looked at each other in silence. I was about to speak when a bell rang, and a strong voice called out: 'Time's up!' The prize-fighter was gone. A warder marched quickly along to Tom and touched him on the

shoulder, and my uncle called to me : ‘Come, Marian.’ Tom cried : ‘God bless you, dear,’ but my vision was blind with tears, a sudden swooning headache made me stagger, and until I was in the street I was scarcely sensible of more than of being led through the passages and out through the gate by my uncle.

CHAPTER X

SHE ATTENDS HER SWEETHEART'S TRIAL

DOWN to the date of the trial, suspense and expectation lay in so crushing a burden upon me that life was hardly supportable. In this time I ceased to wonder that people had the courage to perish by their own hands. Twice after that first visit I saw Tom in Newgate, but those interviews were restricted by the rules of the place to a quarter of an hour, and always the bell sounded and the rude voice of the warder broke in at the moment when I had most to say and most to hearken to.

The trial of my sweetheart took place at the Central Criminal Court on April 17th. The judge was the stony-hearted Maule—memory may deceive me, but I am almost sure it was Mr. Justice Maule. For Tom's defence my uncle had secured the services of

the celebrated Mr. Sergeant Shee, with whom were Mr. Doane and Mr. C. Jones. I drove down to the Old Bailey with my aunt early in the morning. The court was not inconveniently crowded. It was one of those cases which do not excite much attention. A Cashman or a Bishop would have blocked the court with eager spectators of both sexes, but the perils and crimes of the ocean do not appeal to the land-going public.

The judge took his seat at ten o'clock, and Tom was brought in and placed at the bar, charged by indictment that 'he endeavoured, feloniously and maliciously, to cast away and destroy a certain vessel called the *Arab Chief* on the high sea, within the jurisdiction of the Admiralty of England, and also of the Central Criminal Court, with intent to prejudice divers persons as part owners of or underwriters to the same vessel.' He pleaded 'Not guilty.' He spoke very low, but his tones were steady. He looked ill, haggard, and wasted. A great number of persons who were to appear as witnesses were in court, and I searched the many faces

with burning eyes for the two wretches who had brought my sweetheart and me to this horrible pass. But my aunt did not know them, and there was no one at hand to tell me which among those men were Rotch and Nodder.

The case against Tom, as stated at the opening of the prosecution, was merely an elaborate version of the narrative of the facts which he had himself briefly related to me in Newgate. Though nobody had been defrauded, since the ship had not been sunk and no money claimed or paid, yet as much emphasis was laid by the prosecution upon the number of offences in which Tom had insured as though my sweetheart's guilt were beyond question, as though the prosecution indeed had seen him make holes in the ship and sink her, as though he had then arrived in England and received three or four thousand pounds in excess of the worth of the property.

The person who addressed the Court for the prosecution had a very clear, musical voice; he had handsome eyes, and would pause at every pointed passage of his opening

with an eloquent, appealing, concerned look at the jury. His sweet, persuasive tones and looks doubled to my fear the horrible significance of his statements, and I abhorred him whilst I watched him and listened, and could have killed him in my concealed fright and rage for his cool and coaxing and polished utterance of what I knew to be hellish lies. Often would I watch the jury with a devouring gaze. They were in two rows, six in a row, in a box, and one or another who was above would sometimes lean over and whisper, and one would take a note, and one would sit for ten minutes at a time motionless, with his eyes upon the person speaking. The counsel and gentlemen in wigs and gowns sat around a big table loaded with books and papers. A crowd of people hung about outside this sort of well, formed by the table and its circular benches and backs, and whispered and stared and grinned and took snuff. The judge sat, stern and heavily wigged, not far from the jury. Sometimes he took notes; sometimes his chin sank upon his breast. He seemed to see nothing, and if ever he

spoke he appeared to address a vision in mid-air.

I'll not trouble you with the particulars of this trial. I am passing rapidly now into another scene of life. One witness after another stepped into the box to prove the several insurances which had been effected by Tom; others to testify to the value of the *Arab Chief* and her lading. The name of Samuel Rotch was then pronounced, and the man came out of a group of people and briskly ascended to give evidence. The hot blood stung in my cheeks when I saw him. My heart beat as though I was stricken with fever. Tom looked at him and kept his eyes upon him all the while that the wretch was answering questions and giving his evidence, but I never once observed that he even so much as glanced at my sweetheart.

I had expected—nay, indeed, I had prayed—to behold an ill-looking villain, and I believe it told heavily against us that he was an exceedingly good-looking man. His features were regular; his eyes of dark blue, bright and steadfast in their gaze. His white and

regular teeth shone like light when he parted his lips. He was coloured by the sun to the manly complexion of the seaman, and he was about Tom's height, well built, but without my sweetheart's fine, upright, commanding carriage. His voice had a frank note. His replies were quickly delivered, and there was not the least stammer or hesitation in his statements. Added to all this, he spoke with an educated accent.

He told his story plainly, and was not to be shaken. He gave a reason for going into the lazarette which my sweetheart's counsel seemed unable to challenge. It was shown through his evidence that the size of the holes (an inch and a quarter) which were found plugged in the inner skin exactly corresponded with the diameter of the tree-nail auger which had been discovered in Tom's cabin. His evidence was that whilst in the lazarette he had heard the sound of water running into the ship betwixt the lining and the side; he took his lantern to the place of the noise and saw the plugged holes. He went on deck and called to Benjamin Nodder,

who acted as second mate and carpenter ; he likewise summoned others of the crew and they all went into the lazarette and saw the plugged holes and heard the water coming in. Then to preserve their lives and save the ship from sinking they ripped up the plank and plugged the outer holes, thus stopping the leaks, and afterwards repaired in a body to the captain's cabin. Captain Butler threatened to shoot the witness. He was secured, and the cabin searched and the auger found. They proceeded to Rio, and on their arrival Rotch called upon the British Consul, who on the evidence sworn before him thought proper to give the charge of the ship to a new captain and send home the prisoner, together with Rotch, Nodder, and two of the seamen who had descended into the lazarette.

The witness was asked why he suspected the captain of attempting to scuttle the ship instead of any other of the crew.

He answered :

‘ Because I had seen the captain go into the lazarette.’

‘Was it unusual for a captain to enter the lazarette of his own vessel?’

‘No captain,’ the fellow answered, ‘would think of entering a lazarette.’

‘What other grounds for suspicion had he?’

The man replied, the captain had told him that his share in the ship, together with his venture in the cargo and freight, were heavily insured; also, on one occasion, the captain had talked to him about a ship whose master had been sentenced and executed for casting her away; and he had added significantly that it was a good job the law had been changed, and that a man might now venture for a fortune without jeopardising his life.

Tom steadfastly regarded Rotch whilst he gave his evidence; and I knew by the look in my sweetheart's face that the villain in the witness-box fiendishly lied in every syllable he uttered. *of his latter statement*

Many questions in cross-examination were asked, and all of them Rotch answered steadily,

bowing respectfully whenever the judge put a question ; and he always looked very straight, with a fine air of candour and honesty, at the person who interrogated him. He was asked if he had not quarrelled with Captain Butler at Valparaiso. He answered yes. The particulars of that quarrel were dramatically related by Sergeant Shee. Rotch said that every word was true, but that he and Captain Butler had long ago shaken hands over that affair and dismissed it from their memory. He was asked if the prisoner had not reported him on one occasion for insubordination and neglect of duty, and if he had not been dismissed in consequence, though subsequently another berth had been procured for him by the prisoner ? He answered yes, it was quite true. He was asked if it was the fact that one of the owners of the *Arab Chief* had promised him the berth of captain of that ship in any case, since, whether guilty or innocent, Captain Butler would not, after this accusation, be again employed ? He replied it was true ; but then the other side qualified what was to me a damning admission by

saying that the fellow was distantly connected with the owner aforesaid.

The next witness was Benjamin Nodder. This fellow was a rough seaman of a commonplace type, hunched about the shoulders and bandy-legged, with red hair falling about his ears in coarse raw streaks, like slices of carrot; he was wall-eyed, that is, one eye looked away when the other gazed straight. His voice was harsh as the noise of an axe sharpened on a grindstone, and when he stood up in the box he leered unsteadily around him with an effort to stand with dignity, as though he was tipsy. His examination was little more than a repetition of what had been gone through with Rotch.

He was followed by two seamen who had no further evidence to give than that they had helped to stop the leaks and had seen the captain draw a pistol upon Rotch in his cabin; they also testified to the discovery of the auger, one of them saying that he recollected Mr. Nodder telling the men that Captain Butler had come forward and borrowed an auger. *Not likely!*

‘Mr. Nodder,’ said this witness, ‘told us men that he couldn’t imagine what the capt’n wanted an auger for; two days after the hole was found bored in the lazarette.’

Thus ran the questions and the answers. Tom looked steadily at the witnesses as they spoke; but he made no sign; his arms lay motionless, folded upon his breast. Twice or thrice I saw his eyebrows faintly lift, and his lips part as though to a deep breath of irrepressible horror and amazement.

The Court adjourned for lunch after the two seamen had given their evidence; I remained in the court with my aunt. Mr. Johnstone came to us, and I asked him what he thought the verdict would be.

‘Wait for it! Wait for it!’ he exclaimed, petulant with worry and doubts. ‘Did not I tell Butler that he had heavily blundered in over-insuring? And how well Rotch gave his evidence! How frank were the devil’s admissions! Never a wink or a stutter with him from beginning to end! But the twelve have yet to hear the sergeant. Keep up your spirits, Marian!’ And he abruptly left

us, but not without exchanging a look with his wife. I caught that look, and my heart sank and turned cold, as though the hand of death had grasped it.

When the Court reassembled, five witnesses were called to speak to Tom's character. It was shortly before four when the judge had finished summing up. I had followed Sergeant Shee's address with impassioned attention, eagerly watching the faces of the jurymen as he spoke, and detesting the judge for the sleepy air with which he listened and the barristers at the table and the people round about for their inattention and frequent whispers and passing of papers one to another on business of their own, as though the drama of life or death to me which had nearly filled the day had grown tiresome, and they were waiting for the curtain. Then I had followed with a maddening conflict of emotion, but with an ever-gaining feeling of sickness and faintness, like to the sense of a poisoned and killing conviction slowly creeping to the heart against its maddest current of hopes and protests—

thus had I listened to the address of the counsel for the prosecution who replied upon the whole case; and now I listened to Mr. Justice Maule's summing-up, a tedious and inconclusive address. He made little of the points which I believed he would have insisted upon. He talked like a tired man, he retold the testimony, and I seemed to find a prejudice against Tom throughout his delivery.

Then it was left to the jury, and the jury, after an absence of twenty minutes, returned with the verdict of 'Guilty' against the prisoner.

My aunt clutched my hand. I felt a shock as though the blood in my veins had been arrested in ice in its course. Mr. Justice Maule proceeded to pass sentence. He spoke in a sing-song voice, as though at every instant he must interrupt himself with a yawn. He said that the prisoner had been found guilty, after a fair and impartial trial, of the offence of having feloniously and wilfully attempted to destroy the ship *Arab Chief* for the purpose of defrauding the

underwriters. That was the conclusion the jury had arrived at, and he was perfectly satisfied with this verdict. And then he pointed out the gravity of the offence, and how such acts tended to check the spirit of mercantile adventure, and how impossible it would be for insurance companies to exist if they were not protected by the law. He rejoiced that the penalty applied to this crime was no longer capital. At the same time it was his duty to inflict a severe punishment. The sentence of the Court was that the prisoner should be transported beyond the seas for the term of fourteen years.

My aunt sprang to her feet and shrieked aloud when this awful sentence was delivered. I sat dumb and motionless. Never once throughout the day had Tom looked in our direction. Now, on my aunt shrieking, he turned his head, saw me, and pointed upward, as though surrendering our love to God. The next moment he had stepped out of sight.

My uncle came to us. He was white and terribly agitated and shocked.

‘Come!’ he exclaimed. ‘Come along out of this now. We have had enough of it.’

He took me by the hand, and I arose, but I could not speak; I seemed to have been deprived of sensation in the limbs; indeed, I do not know what had come to me. I looked towards the bar where Tom had been standing and sighed, and then walked with my uncle, my aunt following. We passed out of the court and got into the Old Bailey; and when in Ludgate Hill, my uncle called a coach, and we were driven to his home. Nothing was said saving that my uncle once asked, ‘Who cried out?’ My aunt answered:

‘I did.’

I sat rigid, looking with blind eyes at the passing show of the streets. But how am I to describe my feelings! Ask a mother whose child has suddenly died upon her lap; ask a wife whose husband has fallen dead at her feet; ask an adoring lover whose sweetheart, taking refuge with him from a summer thunder-cloud, is slain by a bolt; ask such people so smitten to tell you what they feel!

Nor can my tongue utter what was in me as we drove to my uncle's home after the trial.

When we were arrived my manner frightened my aunt; she feared I'd do myself a mischief and would not lose sight of me. I sat in a chair and never spoke, though I answered when I was addressed, and obeyed mechanically; as, for example, if my aunt entreated me to come to the table and eat I quitted my chair and took up the knife and fork, but without eating. My gaze was fixed! I saw nothing but Tom standing at the bar of the Old Bailey, hearkening to his sentence, lifting up his hand to me and looking upward. If I turned my eyes toward my aunt, Tom was behind her. If my uncle sat before me and addressed me, the vision of Tom painted in bright colours receiving sentence and lifting his hand was behind him.

Once during the evening of the day of the trial, when my uncle came into the parlour, my aunt turned to him and said:

‘If she would only cry!’

She took me to her bed that night, and I lay without speech, seeing Tom as in a vision,

and hearing the sentence over and over again repeated. I may have slept; I cannot tell. My aunt wished me to remain in bed next morning, but when she was dressed I got up and followed her to the parlour.

My uncle sat by a glowing fire; he was deeply interested in a newspaper and was probably reading a report of the trial.

‘Aunt,’ I said, speaking for the first time, and in a voice so harsh and unmusical that my uncle, not knowing that I had entered, looked up with gesture of surprise and dropped the newspaper, ‘I wish to go home.’

‘No, dear, not yet.’

I was about to speak, to say that I believed my going to the house where my father and mother had lived—to the house that was full of old associations, where I had thought to dwell with Tom when we were married—would soothe and do me good. I was about to tell her this, but could not for giving way; and, hiding my face in my hands, I bowed my head upon the table, neither of them speaking nor attempting in any way to arrest the passion of tears.

I felt better after this dreadful outbreak ; it seemed to have cleansed my brain and to give room for my heart to beat and for my spirits to stir in. I looked at the good things upon the table, the eggs and bacon, the ham and the rest, and said :

‘ How do they feed prisoners in jail ? ’

‘ Now, don't trouble about that, Marian,’ said my uncle. ‘ Captain Butler has been a sailor, and he has been bred up on food compared to which the worst fare in the worst jail in England is delicious.’

‘ What will they do with him ? ’

‘ Until they despatch him across the seas they'll keep him in prison at Newgate, perhaps, or they'll send him to Millbank or to the Hulks. No man can tell.’

‘ Don't fret yourself now with these inquiries, Marian,’ said my aunt.

‘ How do they treat convicts in jail, uncle ? ’

‘ Very well, indeed. Better than the majority of them deserve. They feed them, clothe them, and teach them trades to enable them to live honestly by-and-by.’

‘In what sort of ships do the convicts sail?’

‘Oh, in average merchantmen. Owners tender, and a ship is hired. There were twenty-one of them chartered last year at about four p’un’ ten a ton.’

‘Twenty-one!’ cried my aunt. ‘I wonder there are any rascals left in England. Twenty-one! Only think! And perhaps two hundred rogues in each ship.’

‘At least,’ exclaimed my uncle.

‘Are they passenger ships?’ I asked.

‘Many of them.’

‘Could one take one’s passage in a convict ship?’

‘Love you, no! No more than one could take one’s passage in a man-of-war.’

‘Marian, you are making no breakfast,’ said my aunt.

‘What do they do with the convicts when they arrive at their destination?’ I inquired.

‘Why,’ said my uncle, passing his cup for more tea, ‘I can only tell you what I have read. The convicts are lent out as servants to persons in want of labour on their farms,

houses, shops, and so on; some of them are sent up country to make roads. I don't know whether they are paid for their work. They are well fed. It commonly ends in their setting up in business for themselves; and ninety-nine out of every hundred felons, after they have been out in the colonies for a few years, wouldn't come home—to stay at home, I mean—on any account whatever. If I were a poor man, I should not at all object to being transported.'

'Don't say such things!' exclaimed my aunt.

'I shall follow Tom wherever he is sent,' said I, pushing my chair from the table.

'What! To Norfolk Island, for instance? What would you do there?' said my uncle. 'Far better wait in this country, my dear, until Captain Butler returns. They'll be giving him a ticket-of-leave before long. He's bound to behave himself well.'

I stepped to the window and looked out. There had been a note of coldness in my uncle's pronunciation of the words, 'Captain Butler.' I had also caught a startled look,

which was nearly horror, in my aunt when I said that I would follow my sweetheart wherever he was sent. I turned presently and said :

‘ When shall I be able to see Tom ? ’

‘ Once only every three months, I am afraid,’ answered my uncle. ‘ The rules vary with the prisons, but I think you will find that letters and visits are allowed once every three months only. I’ll inquire.’

‘ Shall we hear if he is sent to another place ? ’

‘ We shall always be able to learn where he is.’

He was growing tired of my questions and left the table, having finished his breakfast.

‘ I shall want to know what his defence has cost,’ said I ; ‘ I wish to pay.’

He nodded, and, pulling out his watch, said that he must go to business downstairs. I ran after him as he was leaving the room, and, grasping him by the arm, cried impetuously : ‘ Uncle, do you believe Tom guilty ? ’

‘ I’d not say so if I thought so,’ he answered looking at me, and I guessed by my

feelings that my eyes sparkled and my cheeks were red. 'Let me go, my girl. Everything passes, and to all of us comes a day when we discover that there is nothing under the sun which is worth a tear.'

I dropped my hand, and we walked out of the room. My aunt eyed me strenuously as I paced the floor. I could not sit, my heart was full of rage, and all the while a resolution was forming and hardening in me; indeed I caught myself thinking aloud, and often I'd halt with my hand clenched like one distraught. My aunt presently said:

'Why not sit down, dear, and nurse your strength a little? You have been sorely tried. Cannot we arrange for another trip to the seaside?'

'And leave——' I cried, and broke short off and forced myself to say softly: 'No, aunt.'

'But what do you mean to do? I wish to act as a mother to you, Marian. I thank God you are not his wife.'

'Don't say that!'

'But I must say it!' she exclaimed,

bridling. 'It's through me that you are not his wife, and I rejoice heartily that I advised you as I did. What! Would you, with your means and your beauty and your opportunities, be the wife of a convict?'

I felt the temper in me swelling into madness. I durst not stay, for I dreaded myself then, and flung out of the room, leaving her talking. I ran upstairs to put on my outdoor clothes, and when I returned my aunt was on the landing. She exclaimed that she had not meant what she said. I looked her earnestly in the face, for I did not believe her; but already my temper was gone. Ill-temper lives but a short time when there is great misery. I kissed her and thanked her for her kindness and love, and, telling her I must go home to look after things, I left the house.

CHAPTER XI

SHE VISITS H.M.S. 'WARRIOR'

I REMAINED at home several days, seeing nobody, waited upon by my maid and denying myself to everybody. My aunt sent to inquire after me, and my maid's answers satisfied her. I pulled the blinds down and sat alone in my grief, with Tom's miniature upon my knee. But always at dusk I stole forth and walked in the Old Bailey, close against the walls of Newgate Prison, that I might be near my dear one. I wrote to him and took my chance of the letter reaching his hands. I told him that no man was ever more truly loved by his sweetheart; that wherever he went I would go; and let them send him where they would, he would find me there; and I swore to him that he was innocent, the victim of a monstrous, transparent

conspiracy, and I said I prayed every night to God to punish the villains who had brought us to this miserable state.

It was about a fortnight after the trial that one of my trustees, Captain Galloway, asked me by letter for an appointment; he presented himself with Captain Fairman, the other trustee. They were both bluff, hearty seamen of the old school, somewhat resembling each other, though not connected. The motive of their visit was to get me to give up Tom. Captain Galloway had not forgotten my treatment of his son, and talked with ill-advised heat. He did not deny that he considered Captain Butler guilty. I listened with contempt at first, but this gave way to temper which rose into wrath, and I fairly gave the devil they had aroused within me his way. When they had gone I caught sight of myself in a mirror, and I looked as flaming and red and swelling and breathless as any mad murderess in a padded cell.

I guessed my aunt was at the bottom of these captains' visits. She must have asked Mr. Stanford to talk to me too; otherwise I

doubt if he had dared venture it. Yet I listened to the fellow patiently till he told me that he spoke as the representative of my mother on earth ; that made me think of my father and I started up. I meant no physical violence though I was capable of it then, but my manner of jumping up was so menacing that he instantly started from his chair and hastened out of the room, slamming the door after him.

I would not trust my uncle to obtain news of Tom. I knew that all interested in me wished me to break off with my sweetheart, and would hoodwink me if they could by keeping me in ignorance that Tom had been sent out of the country. A clerk named Woolfe who had been in my uncle's employ had started for himself; he was a shrewd, unscrupulous young dog. I bargained with him to get me news of Tom, and to work all methods of communication practicable by bribery. From him I learned that my sweetheart had been removed from Newgate to Millbank. The fellow took a hundred guineas from me in all, but did no more for the money

than discover where Tom was; and one day, about four months after Tom's conviction, this young rogue of a lawyer called upon me at Stepney to say that Tom had been transferred from Millbank to H.M.S. *Warrior* hulk, moored off Woolwich Dockyard.

‘Are you sure?’ I cried.

‘I am now from Millbank,’ said he.

‘And what will happen next?’ I demanded.

‘They’ll keep him at forced labour at the dockyard,’ he answered, ‘till a transport hauls alongside the hulk for a cargo.’

‘When will that be?’

‘Impossible to say, miss.’

‘Will you get me the rules of the hulk?’

‘They are the same as the jails.’

‘But I have not seen Captain Butler since his conviction, nor heard from him, nor know whether he has received my letters.’

He answered that he would make inquiries and call. He was intelligibly punctual, because he had to receive ten guineas, but he brought me what I wanted to know, and to my joy I learned that I was at liberty to

visit Tom next day, and that he would be brought on board to see me if he was ashore when I arrived.

The morning following I dressed with care. I wore black clothes. I had worn black ever since my sweetheart was taken from me. I put on a black veil, and going into the street, walked till I met with a coach, and drove to Blackwall. I had not visited those parts since Tom and I and the others had seen Will Johnstone off, and I dared not glance in the direction of the hotel in which my sweetheart had made love to me and asked me to marry him. Indeed, my heart needed all the fortitude my spirit could give it.

It was a bright, hot day. The sky was high with delicate, frostlike cloud, and the running river blue with the reflection of the heavens. The wind was a light summer breeze and blew from London, and many ships of many rigs floated before it, some of them lifting lofty fabrics of swelling breasts of canvas, some of them dark with a weather-stained look, like my father's coasters. Here

at Blackwall I took a boat, and told the man to row me to the *Warrior* hulk.

‘ You know her ? ’ said I.

He was an elderly man, dressed in a tall hat and jersey ; he exposed a few yellow fangs as he lay back on his oars and said :

‘ Know her ? Yes. Know the *Warrior* ! Yah might as well ask me if I know St. Paul’s. Going aboard ? ’

‘ Yes.’

‘ Friend aboard ? ’

I inclined my head.

‘ I had a nevvey locked up in that there hulk,’ said the man. ‘ He had six year. Now’s out and doon well. He drove a light cart drawn by a nag as could trot, and called hisself a pig-dealer. Do ’spectable pig-dealers break into houses o’ night ? The *Warrior* cured my nevvey. He ain’t above talking of that ship. Get him in the mood, and he ’ll spin yah some queer yarns about her.’

‘ How are the prisoners treated ? ’

‘ Sights o’ stone-breaking and stacking o’ timber. They put my nevvey to draw carts.

They sunk his name and caa'd him a number.
A man doan' feel a man when he's a number.
But the job my nevey least enjoyed was
scraping shot.'

'How are they fed?'

'By contract. Yah knows what that
means. Beef all veins. Ever heard of
"smiggins," miss?'

'No.'

'It's hulk soup : convicts' name for greasy
warm water. Call it twenty year ago, I was
passing a hulk stationed afore the *Defence*
came up; a boat was 'longside with provisions
for the day; what d'ye think? With my own
eyes I see the prisoners as was hoisting the
grub out of the boat chuck it overboard.
Was they flogged?'

He shook his head, grinning horribly.

His manners and answers shocked and
depressed me, and I asked him no more
questions.

'Ain't it rather sing'ler,' said he, after a
few minutes' pause, 'that there's only one
flower as 'll grow upon a convict's grave?'

'Is that so?'

‘Ay. And what flower d’ye think it is, miss?’ said he, again showing his fangs.

‘I don’t know.’

‘It’s a nettle. If yah should care to visit the burial-ground yonder,’ he continued, with a backward nod of his head in the direction of Woolwich, ‘yah ’ll see for yourself. As if nothen would blow ower a convict but that! Of course the finger o’ nater’s in it. The finger o’ nater’s got the straight tip for most jobs. It’s daisies for the likes of you and me, and nettles for them as goes wrong.’

I was too agitated to converse with such a heartless creature as this. My mind was full of Tom. I wondered how he would greet me—how I should find him looking. We should be allowed but a quarter of an hour. What time would that give me, to whom a long summer day was all too brief in which to tell him how I loved him; how I meant to follow him; how our loyalty to one another should, if God permitted, triumph yet over the horrors and the sufferings which might lie between the now and the hour of victorious emergence!

We were still about a mile from the hulk, when I observed a large ship in tow of a tug coming up the river. She sat deep in the water and was plainly fresh from a long voyage, rusty about the bows and weather-stained along the line of her painted ports; but she carried the smartness of a frigate aloft in the well-squared yards, from which all canvas had been unbent, and in the perfectly-stayed and lofty topgallant-masts, whose royal yards had been sent down. I seemed to recognise the large house-flag she flew at the main.

'What ship is that?' I asked, well aware that Thames watermen know every ship out of London.

He turned his chin on his shoulder and viewed her leisurely and answered:

'The *Childe Harold*.'

'The *Childe Harold*!' I cried, and I threw up my veil to look at her. Will Johnstone's ship! I could scarcely credit my eyes. She glided, stately and slow, in the wake of the tug. Her home was at hand, the forest of the East India Docks was in sight, and the

paddles of the little steamer were beating the water slowly.

I observed a crowd of people on the fore-castle, and a number of men and women walked the poop, or after-deck. The red flag streamed brightly from the peak, the glass and brass about her sparkled, the little circular windows in her side flashed like gems as they took the sun, and the raiment of the ladies fluttered in many tints. Here and there a sailor was trotting aloft, and a man standing high and conspicuously on the fore-castle was shouting, with one hand against his mouth, to the tug. As the noble ship passed she made a holiday picture of the water round about her and the land on either hand. I stared hard, hoping I might catch a sight of Will, but the distance between was too wide to enable me to distinguish faces.

‘There’s no finer ship out of London,’ said the waterman. ‘She’s from Australey. That’s where the gents yah’re going to visit are sent to. If there’s naught but nettles to be blowed out of dead convicts there’s blisterin’

fine cities to be growed out of live ones. I'm going to Australey myself some of these here days—just to take a look 'round—work my way out and home again. A shilling a month 'ud do. I'm no sailor man.'

He sank into silence. The *Childe Harold* floated away astern, and now right ahead of us and near loomed the giant figure of the prison-hulk *Warrior*, her head pointing toward London. Another hulk lay moored close by. All these hulks, those off the Arsenal, as well as those off the Dockyard, were as familiar to me as the fingers of my hand. Over and over again had I passed them and looked at them during my lonely pleasant jaunts upon the river, but always with an incurious eye; but a new, deep, fearful significance had now to my gaze entered the grim and hideous fabric of the mountainous *Warrior*. I viewed the rows of ports savagely and massively grated, and thought of the many eyes of crime and suffering, of guilt—and, O my God! of innocence too—which might have peered through those metal meshes at the outside scene of flowing river, with the spirit of liberty strong

in the speeding craft, in the flight of the cloud, in the feathering of the hissing ripple.

She was a hideous ship, horrible in her suggestions of human crime and despair. Rows of coarse convict linen fluttered betwixt her pole masts, at the head of the foremost of which streamed the long pennon of the State. She was bulged up all about the bows with rude band-box-like buildings; cowled ventilating-shafts gaped above her decks; the dull gleam of gilt and glass about her vast quarter-galleries and stern affected the imagination as a faded memorial of times when her sides bristled with the black dogs of war, when her copper sheathing trembled like a glance of sunset under her, when she lifted star-searching spires to the sky, space upon space of symmetric whiteness swelling soft as sifted snow to the glittering buttons of her trucks.

There was an off gangway ladder, with a warder standing like a sentinel at the head of it. The convicts were ashore, all of them, saving a few, silent at their trades under deck. A singular hush lay upon the big ship; though

the morning was advanced and wide and brilliant, and the river alive with stemming barges and row-boats and sailing craft of all sorts, and alive too on the banks where the Dock-yard was, and higher, where were many low wharves and dismantled hulks and riverside public-houses, and higher yet, where the Arsenal was, with its chimneys pouring smoke and feathers of steam darting from great square buildings ; such was the stillness upon this slumbering mass of prison hulk, that, as we drew alongside, I could hear no sound but the sob of the stream of tide washing along the bends and an occasional groan of aged timber as the sweep of the water strained the old fabric upon its bed of mud.

I bade the waterman wait, got upon the ladder, and ascended. The warder or officer at the gangway inquired my business. I told him I was a visitor come to see one of the convicts, Thomas Butler. He bade me pass on to the quarter-deck, where were assembled two or three groups of persons who were also arrived to visit friends. The people might have come on board by way of a gallery

which connected the ship with the shore on the port or left-hand side ; this gallery was defended under the forecastle by a huge iron palisade with two strong gates for padlocking.

The warder at the gangway spoke to an officer who stood within earshot. He crossed the deck and the shore was hailed, but I know not by whom nor heard what was said. I had lifted my veil to look at the *Childe Harold* and kept it up. My pulse throbbed fast, and I knew I was very white, but my mood had become resolved by temper. My heart turned sick at the sight of the wide decks with their grimy incumbrances of convicts and officers' galleys and hammock-houses and other heaped and sordid and filthy-looking structures. I thought of Tom as an innocent man doomed to soul-killing work ashore and heart-breaking immurement in this hulk, locked up below at night with hundreds of felons, many of whom had been fetched by the hands of justice out of the gutters and slums and rookeries of that city whose atmosphere even in the far distance tinged and tainted the blue of the summer sky.

I stood viewing the ship and wondering at what part of her my sweetheart would appear. A man came from the forward end, looking from right to left with inspecting eyes as he walked ; he approached and lightly surveyed me and the others who were waiting. He was a strongly built man, dressed in a sort of uniform frock coat decorated with a riband and clasp ; on his head was a large bell-shaped cap like to what I have seen in pictures of German and Russian officers. The expression of his face was firm, but there was a colouring of kindness in it. A glow of interest kindled in his ball-like eyes, and saluting me with a flourish of his hand to the peak of his cap, he asked whom I had come to see.

'One of the convicts, Thomas Butler,' I answered.

He stepped over to a warder, then returned.

'Are you his wife, madam ?'

'I am his sweetheart and engaged to be married to him,' I said, colouring, and raised my hand to my veil, though I left my face exposed, nevertheless.

‘Ha!’ he exclaimed, with a sigh of pity.

‘He is innocent, sir. Devils in the shape of men have falsely sworn him into this dreadful situation.’

‘They are all innocent who come here; they are all innocent,’ said he in a voice of great irony.

‘Are you the captain of this ship, sir?’

‘This ship has no captain,’ he answered, smiling. ‘I am the deputy-governor.’

‘Captain Butler is sentenced to fourteen years’ transportation; shall I know when he sails?’

‘The rules will allow him to communicate with you. Our regulations are carried out with great consideration. You observe that if a friend calls while a man is away at labour, he is sent for.’

‘How often may I see Captain Butler?’

‘Every three months.’

‘Oh, sir!’ I clasped my hands and rocked myself; then summoning my former spirit, for I was eager to get all information possible from this communicative and sympathetic

personage, I said : ' How often may I write to him and he to me ? '

' Every three months,' he repeated, but softly, with a glance at the waiting groups who had insensibly stolen toward us to listen.

' He may sail within the next three months, and I shall not know where he is gone.'

' The regulations will permit of his communicating with you through the governor before he sails, and you will be allowed to bid him farewell.'

' And will he be able to tell me to what part of the world he is to be sent ? '

' That's not always known at the Admiralty, down, sometimes, to the last minute. A convict ship has before now brought up in the Downs bound to Hobart Town or Norfolk Island, and her destination has been changed by express to Botany Bay.'

He touched his cap with a slight bow having thus spoken, and crossed to the other waiting poor folks as though willing to be questioned.

I paced a little space of the deck. I could

have held him long in converse ; I had, methought, a thousand questions to ask. On a sudden, happening to look along the deck to the left, I saw a number of men appear. Some of them were convicts and the others were the guard. They came into the ship by the gallery that stretched from the quay to the gangway. The convicts were dressed in a rusty brown suit with red stripes upon it ; they all looked alike, so horribly levelling is the garb of the felon. A woman who was waiting shrieked out and ran some steps, and a little boy of ten or twelve, whose hand was grasped by a young woman, called out :

‘Father ! Father !’ and ‘began to cry piteously, still calling : ‘Father ! Father !’

The warders came to a pause near the hatch. There were four convicts ; three of them were embraced by the women who had been waiting, the little boy meanwhile continuing to cry loudly, and two of the women sobbing piteously ; the fourth advanced and paused with his eyes upon me.

It was Tom, but for a few minutes I did

not know him. His face was a fiery red and wet with sweat, as though he had been brought fresh from some exhausting labour; his hair was closely cut, and his beard was cleanly shaved. The loathsome garb had as utterly transformed him as though he had been wrapped in the shroud of the dead. I cried his name and fled to him. He locked me in his arms, and so we stood for a little while speechless.

‘My Marian!’

‘Oh, Tom, time is precious and I have much to say! Have you received any letters from me?’

‘None.’

‘I have written to you often. Why did they not give you my letters? But you would not think because you did not hear from me that I was forgetting you?’

‘Have you heard from me, Marian?’

‘No, Tom.’

‘I have written. But a prison-governor may stop a felon’s letters, and mine have been stopped, and they have not given me yours. We may have written too strongly.’

He started and looked at me a little wildly and cried :

‘Marian, why are you here? This atmosphere is pollution. Look at my dress; look at these hands. I have worn chains; I am driven as though I were a mad and dangerous beast; I am herded with ruffians, and I am innocent! I swear by your pure heart, Marian, I am guiltless of the crime for which they have put me into this ship and for which they send me ashore by day to—to—— Why are you here, dear?’ he cried, still wildly, and now a little incoherently. ‘They have helishly sworn me, innocent as I am, into this. They have made a felon of me. They are sending me from my country, and my heart must break—my heart must break!’ he said, sobbing convulsively. ‘And they will bury me in a convict’s grave. Oh, Marian, it is at an end between us—it must be so. I am a convict, ruined and for ever dishonoured. Look at me!’

My heart was bursting whilst I listened to him, but the great God, who knew that my sweetheart was a cruelly and terribly wronged

man, gave me, of His mercy, heart and spirit. I had much to say, and the moments were flying. I looked at him with a smile and grasped his hand in both mine. He struggled faintly, but I continued to hold his hand.

'Tom, you are not dishonoured, you are not ruined. You are wronged. Only that, my darling; no more. Hear me, dear,' and I softened my voice, for I was sensible of the deep thrill of my earnestness in every syllable that fell from me. 'I have come to tell you that my love is unchangeable; that my love for you now is sanctified by your misery, and that it is deeper, truer and holier, Tom, than ever it was before. Oh, hear me, love, and take heart! Wherever you go, I will go. I shall learn where they send you and accompany you or follow you. Nothing but death can separate us. I have walked night after night beside the prison walls that I might be near you, and whilst you are here I shall be near you. They cannot separate us. Always believe, always know, that whilst you are in this ship—yes, whilst they are trying to break your heart ashore—I am present—oh, not in

sympathy, not in love, not in spirit only, Tom, but near you, but close as they will let me be to you in my own person. Does that comfort you?’

He lifted my hand and bowed his head upon it.

‘Something may happen at any time to prove your innocence,’ I continued.

‘What could happen, Marian? Will Rotch ever admit that he perjured himself merely to get charge of my ship and to punish me for reporting him and for my treatment of him at Valparaiso?’

‘But your banishment is not for life, Tom.’

‘It is! It is!’ he cried. ‘Who ever returns from transportation?’

‘They will give you your liberty after a time; you will be free, and I shall be with you. I have money, and we will establish ourselves and be happy, my darling.’

‘My noble heart, your love breaks me down!’ he cried, looking up and grasping me by the hands, then covering his eyes.

‘I was talking with a man before you

came, Tom. He is the deputy-governor. Yonder he stands. He tells me that you will be allowed to write and inform me when you are to sail. You will receive the news and have leave to convey it. Will you do so?’

He viewed me in a shrinking way.

‘Oh, Tom, Tom, you must swear to write to me!’ I cried in a sudden fit of despair. ‘Swear it! If you do not write, how shall I know when you have gone and where you have gone? Swear you will write! Swear it! Swear it!’ I clutched him by the arm in my passion of eagerness and desire, repeating: ‘Swear it!’

‘You must not follow me. You must not leave your home for me.’

‘Swear it, Tom!’

‘I shall be a servant, a slave out in Australia, a convict always, whether freed or not.’

‘Oh, swear it, Tom!’

‘They may flog me—chain me in a gang——’

‘Swear to write and tell me when you sail.’

He was silent, breathed deeply, then his

eyes lighted up with love, and he exclaimed in a low voice :

‘ I swear it ! ’

‘ Would it be for you to divide us, Tom ? ’

He faintly smiled and answered :

‘ You know me to be innocent, Marian. ’

‘ Yes, as I am of that crime they have charged you with. ’

‘ What do they say of me ? What is thought ? ’

‘ Tom, what does it matter ? You are innocent, and I love you. ’

‘ My noble heart, God bless you. What does your uncle think ? ’

‘ Time’s up ? ’ cried a warder.

‘ You have sworn it, Tom. Remember ! ’

‘ I will write, dearest, I swear it, I will write. ’

‘ Come, my man ! ’ shouted one of the guard.

‘ Remember, Tom ! ’ I exclaimed.

‘ I will write to you, ’ were his last words.

I stood watching him as he walked with the other convicts and the guard to the gang-way gallery. The excitement and grief of

this meeting worked like a fever in me. My breast was violently heaving, my eyes were dry and hot, as though full of fire, my lips parched as though pale and broken with thirst. I stepped over to the deputy-governor and said :

‘Will money help a man in this ship?’

‘No, madam,’ said he shortly, eyeing me with a look of grave surprise.

‘I will send fifty pounds to you or the governor, and as much again when that money is spent, to furnish Thomas Butler with comforts outside the horrible prison fare.’

‘Gently, madam. The prison fare is not so horrible as you think. Many get such food here as they never see out of jail and never get money enough to purchase after their discharge. Cocoa, bread, beef, soup—such food is not horrible. But the wealth of the Indies would not help your friend in this hulk.’

I bowed to him, dropped my veil, went to the side and entered the wherry. The waterman began to talk ; to this moment I

believe it was he and not his nephew who had been a convict. I kept my lips sealed, and the man sank into silence whilst he rowed steadily in the direction of Blackwall. When we turned a bend so as to get a sight of the docks, I spied the *Childe Harold* lying athwart the stream, with her head close in to the dock entrance. The waterman looked at her and said he guessed she was hindered by some difficulty of the tide. Addressing the fellow for the first time, I bade him pull close under the stern of the ship, as I desired to hail her. I stared anxiously as we approached, thinking I might see Will Johnstone. A number of men were travelling round a capstan on the forecastle, and a hurricane chorus swept in regular pauses from their lungs as the pawls clanked to the thrust of the handspikes. A knot of people were gathered on the pier-head ; a few figures walked the poop-deck.

We pulled close under the stern of the ship where the water was sparkling in diamonds and trembling in gold to the windy flash and the ruddy gleam of the sun-touched

windows and the gilt work, and on looking up I saw no less a person than my cousin Will himself in the act of handling the peak signal halliards to clear the ensign.

I cried out, 'Will, Will, is that you, Will?' and threw up my veil.

He heard me and looked over, and after staring an instant full of wonder, he violently clapped his hands with boyish joy, and shouted down: 'Why, Marian, is that you? Have you come off to meet me? How kind of you! How's mother? How's father?'

'They are well, Will; they are very well. How brown you are! You are as broad and tall again as you were.'

'You look very white down there, Marian. Come on board and give me all the news.'

'No, I cannot come on board. I shall be seeing you very soon.'

'How is Captain Butler? Are you married yet, Marian? Oh, there's a lot for me to hear! I haven't had a syllable of home news since we left Sydney. We've made a ripping passage home—seventy-eight days from Sydney Heads to Soundings.'

‘When shall I see you, dear?’

‘The moment the ship’s in dock I’ll go home. Father can’t have heard that the ship’s in the river, or he or mother would be here to meet me, wouldn’t they? If you’re going straight ashore, Marian, and ’ll be seeing them soon, tell ’em I shall be home this afternoon, and ’ll be glad of a good blow-out—roast beef to be the main thing; I don’t care what they surround it with. I’m stiff with the brine of the harness cask. Is Captain Butler in England?’

‘You shall have all the news when I see you at my house, Will. You are busy now. We’ll meet to-morrow, Will.’

‘To-night, to-night, Marian! I have a hundred fine yarns to spin you.’

‘Thank God you are safely returned,’ said I, and kissing my hand to him, I sank into my seat, and the boatman plied his oars.

‘Fine young gent, that,’ said the boatman, ‘but a first voyager, I lay. Them young gents is all for eating after the first voyage; after the second they’s all for drinking. And who’s a-going to blame ’em?’ said he, smack-

ing his lips. 'Didn't Noah himself take to drink after a few weeks of the Ark—and yon's a nine months' job.'

I paid the man, landed, walked till I came to a coach and drove to Stepney. I remained alone and at home for the remainder of the day. My heart ached, and sometimes I wept; yet I was thankful to have seen Tom, thankful to know he was sure now that I was faithful to him, thankful for all that had passed between us, few as our words had been. In the evening I received a note from my aunt telling me that Will was returned, and begging me to come to supper. I sent word by the messenger that I was low and poorly, and hoped to see Will at my house very soon.

CHAPTER XII

SHE RAMBLES WITH HER COUSIN

I BREAKFASTED somewhat late next morning, and whilst the cloth was still on the table my maid announced Will. I sprang up to greet him and gave him a hearty hug. He had grown during his absence into a handsome, fine young fellow. His eyes seemed to sparkle with the gleams of the sea; he was coloured a rich, manly brown, and no young fellow that ever I remember had so completely the look of a saucy and spirited young English sailor. The sight of him so near, and in my room, dimmed my eyes. I thought of our holiday rambles when Tom was by my side, when all was music and laughter and the sweetness of flowers, and sleep filled with soft dreams.

‘Mother and father met me, after all, Marian,’ said he, throwing his cap on to a

sofa. 'They are waiting for me at the ship's berth. But what terrible news! Poor Marian!' And in the fulness of his heart, unable to say more just then, he came across and kissed me. I sobbed aloud even while I felt the comfort of his sympathy. 'But he never did it, Marian. Father told me the whole story. They've got a paper containing the trial at home, and I read it carefully through last night. Rotch and Nodder are villains. If Captain Butler had been tried by a judge and jury of sailors he'd have been acquitted.'

'He's as innocent as you, Will.'

'And sentenced to fourteen years' transportation! Why, that's almost a life-sentence at his age. Where is he now?'

'In the *Warrior* hulk, off Woolwich.'

'Were you coming from him when I saw you yesterday?'

'Yes, dear.'

'Poor Marian! Father fears he's guilty; but he's not—I'll swear it. Why, I have his face before me now,' he cried with his eyes kindling. 'He could not do a wrong. And

how he loved you, Marian! But what's to be done?' He walked with a rolling gait about the room. 'I'd do anything to make you happy. Little I guessed what had happened when I asked you yesterday if you were married to him.'

'I shall follow him to Australia, Will.'

'Mother says that's your idea. But what will you do when you get there? He'll be as much a prisoner in Australia as here, won't he?'

'No. I've read and found out. I've learned all I wanted to know from Mr. Woolfe,' said I, naming the sharp young attorney that had been a clerk to my uncle. 'Certainly, a man is still a convict when he arrives, and he remains a convict; but he's not locked up in hulks and jails. The Government puts the men into barracks when they arrive, and lends them out to those who want labourers and servants and help. Tom will rank as a gentleman convict; he's good with his pen and he's a scholar, Will; they may make him a clerk. He is not a mechanic, and he's too good to send to the roads.'

‘How do you know all this, old woman?’

‘I know very much more, Will,’ said I, smiling in my sadness. ‘Could I love Tom and not learn all that lies before him as though I was to share it? If they would put me to work in the dockyard by his side, how happy I should be! If they’d but lock me up in that horrible hulk with him—but they’ll not be able to separate us, Will. Oh, I have a fine scheme! When he sails I’ll follow in the next ship. I have money, and I’ll establish myself, and I’ll ask for a servant, and bribe and bribe until I get Tom, and if I fail I am still near him. They may give him a ticket-of-leave quickly; they must give him a ticket-of-leave in six years if he behaves well. If—if—but oh, he’ll behave well!’

‘How your eyes flash! You’re as red as fire! You’ve got a magnificent spirit! I always said so. You’re a splendid woman, and you’ll make it right for both of you, yet.’

‘Is my scheme wicked?’

‘No, no!’

‘Is it wrong for a woman who loves a

man to be true to him to the grave, let what will happen before death?’

‘It is right!’ he cried.

‘Uncle would have me break with Tom. So would aunt. Tom is first with me after my God.’

He clapped his hands and hurrahed like a boy.

‘Can I see him?’

‘Not for another three months.’

He struck his knee with his fist and smothered a sea oath.

This sort of talk, however, was no very cheery welcome on my part to the poor lad; so I presently got him to tell me about his voyage and how he liked the sea, and when he was again to sail, and I then gave him five pounds which I had put aside for him; his father, though a hospitable man, kept Will a little short. I wished the boy, after his long months at sea, to pass a jolly holiday, and told him when he kissed and thanked me, that another five should be his when that was spent.

‘We’ll go a-rambling again, Marian,’ said

he. 'Those were fine times. You're white with trouble, and some of those milk and buttercup trips we used to take will do you good.'

I sighed and made no answer. He went to Tom's miniature and stood looking at it; then began to talk again with eagerness and enthusiasm about my scheme of following my sweetheart.

'And why shouldn't you go?' said he, pacing the room. 'You're alone in the world, and Tom's first and everything to you. Father and mother won't like your going, and you'll be sorry to leave them, but they're not your parents. Tom's all in all. If I loved a girl as you love Tom she'd be all in all to me, and I'd follow her whilst a stick lasted, till the plank grew as thin as a sailor's shirt. But there's this in my mind, Marian—before you start in pursuit, you must know where Captain Butler has been sent to.'

'He'll know and tell me.'

'Suppose he should be sent to Hobart Town and you make sail to Sydney, believing him there? You don't know how big all that

part of the world is. There's a story of an Irishman who bought a commission in the 71st in order that he might be near his brother in the 70th. Have you got an atlas? Hobart Town's a mighty long way from Botany Bay.'

'He'll tell me the settlement.'

'But suppose it should be Norfolk Island? One of our Jacks knew that settlement. The frightfulest ruffians go there. The sailor said that when the convicts are removed they're double cross ironed and chained down to the deck. Everybody's afraid of them. Now what would you do there in a settlement of a few troops and scores of horrible villains?'

I smiled and said: 'Where Tom is sent, I go;' and then starting up, and flashing upon him in my old hot-tempered impulsive fashion, I cried: 'I know all about Norfolk Island; I shall know what to do, Will.' I sobered my voice and added, 'I have been scheming for months all alone, dear. All the while that my darling has been in jail I have been planning and planning. I care not what

the settlement be ; let me have its name and I am ready.'

Will stayed an hour talking with me in my rooms. He then made me put on my hat and go for a walk.

From this time we were as often together as though we had been brother and sister and lived in the same house. His company wonderfully cheered and supported me. I loved him for his affectionate sympathy ; above all for his seeing things just as I did. On this account I was more frequently at my aunt's than before his return from sea. She and my uncle sometimes talked of Tom, but never now in a way to vex me. They both knew my character ; they witnessed the faith and devotion in my face whenever my sweetheart's name was pronounced ; they had gathered with the utmost significance from Will what my intention was when Tom should be sent across the seas, and saw the hopelessness of entreaty. Indeed, I was my own mistress. I was of age ; I was answerable to no one. They knew all this and held their peace, though both of them, and my aunt

especially, were secretly very uneasy and distressed by my loyalty to a convict.

I had told Tom that I would be near him in person, and once I had a mind to take a lodging in Woolwich; but Stepney was not too far distant to enable me to easily satisfy my craving and fulfil my promise to be near him often; moreover, I never knew from day to day when I might hear that he was to be transhipped, and I wished to be ready to swiftly complete all my arrangements to follow him. And that is why I remained at home in Stepney instead of taking a lodging near the dockyard at Woolwich, though over and over again, sometimes four and sometimes five times a week, would I hire a boat and hang about the *Warrior* hulk.

Mr. Woolfe had got me the regulations of the prison ship; I knew at what time the convicts went ashore to their forced labour, the hour they returned to dinner, when they returned again to their tea or supper, and at what time the hatches were put over them and padlocked for the night. Indeed, I could say off the regulations and every article in

the list of the prison fare by heart, and I lived in imagination in the horrid routine of the ship.

I once had a burning desire to visit the huge hulk at night when all the people were at rest in their hammocks within her and the hatches on. I had plenty of spirit as a young woman, and was, on the whole, a fearless young creature; but I own I shrank from trusting myself alone in a wherry at night on the Thames with one of the watermen of those times. I asked Will if he would accompany me. He cheerfully consented, and I arranged with a fellow at Wapping to await us at Blackwall, to save the circuit at Limehouse and Greenwich Reaches.

It was a night about the middle of September, somewhat cold, but not uncomfortably so. We reached the hulk, and lay off her close in, the waterman quietly plying to keep his boat steady in the stream. The sky was dim and the stars gleamed sparely; there was just weight enough of wind to run the water sobbing along the bends of the towering, motionless old seventy-four. The shore

was dotted with spots of light, and under every one of them a thread of gold wavered like a wriggling eel striking for the depths. The deep hush of the night lay sensibly as the darkness itself upon the flat marshes of Plumstead and across the river where the Plaistow level stretched. The passing ships went by silent as shadows. Now and again a man's voice would sound aboard one of them; I'd hear the rumbling of a yard suddenly let go or the rattling of the hanks of canvas leisurely hoisting. Here and there the grated ports of the hulk showed in a square of dim light, but even as I watched a clear-tongued bell on board was twice struck.

'Nine o'clock,' said Will, and as though a cloud had passed over the huge fabric every light went out; the white bands of the checkered sides seemed to hover out upon the eye—pallid and ghastly with their wild grin of grated ports; the pole masts died out away up in the gloom.

'How many convicts are there aboard?' asked Will.

‘Over four hundred, sir,’ answered the waterman.

The lad seemed awed by the thought of that number. Not yet would sleep have visited the weariest of those eyes within, and the fancy of the mass of human suffering and crime and sorrow lying mute and awake, with no other sound about the ship than the sob of running water, made the silence of her awful. I stood up, and my heart gave away in a cry of passion and misery, and scarcely sensible of what I did I extended my arms toward the hulk and moaned :

‘Oh, Tom! Oh, Tom! Why were you taken from me? What has been your sin that you should be there?’ and then I broke into a strangled fit of crying.

Will pulled me gently on to a seat and fondled me and told me to keep up my courage, for that I had spirit enough to bring things right.

‘Boat, ahoy! What boat is that?’ was shouted from the gangway of the hulk.

The waterman answered.

‘Shove ahead with you!’ cried the voice.
‘No boats are allowed to lie off here.’

‘Pull for Blackwall,’ said Will.

‘And time, too,’ said the waterman as he swept the boat’s head around. ‘They’re armed with loaded carbines up there, and they’d make no more of sending a ball through a man’s head than drinkin’ his health.’

CHAPTER XIII

SHE CONCEIVES A STRANGE IDEA

ON Friday, October 18, I went to drink tea and sup with my aunt, whom I had not visited nor indeed seen for nearly a fortnight. Whilst we sat at tea, my uncle being present, Will came into the room; his manner was rather excited, he entered with some vehemence, and looking around at us cried out:

‘What do you think?’

‘What?’ asked my uncle.

‘The tender of the owners of the *Childe Harold* has been accepted, and we are to load convicts for one of the settlements early next month.’

I started, then sat motionless, feeling my cheeks bloodless.

‘Who told you this?’ said my uncle.

‘Mr. Bates. I met him in the Minories. He only got the news this afternoon.’

‘Convicts?’ said my aunt. ‘I don’t like the idea of your going out in a convict ship.’

‘Safe as the Bank of England,’ said my uncle. ‘They carry plenty of soldiers, plenty of sailors, and a large freight of handcuffs and irons. What more would you have?’

‘Suppose Captain Butler should be put into our ship!’ exclaimed Will, looking at me.

I could not make him any answer then.

‘The chances are a hundred to one against such a probability,’ exclaimed my uncle. ‘It is a big convict ship that takes out three hundred felons. How many have you aboard the Thames’s hulks alone? Not less than one thousand, I dare say. Then batches are picked up at Portsmouth and Plymouth. Consider the odds. Besides, Butler has served no time in the hulks. Yet it would be extraordinary should it come to pass,’ he added musingly.

‘The ship goes to Deptford to be equipped—I don’t know when,’ said Will.

‘Will the *Childe Harold* be the only convict ship of her date?’ I asked.

‘That’s to be found out,’ said Will.

‘I’ll find out!’ I exclaimed.

‘Why do you ask, Marian?’ said my slow-minded aunt.

‘Tom is to tell me when he sails,’ I replied. ‘If his date is to be the *Childe Harold’s* date, and if there should be no other vessel, Will’s ship will be Tom’s ship.’

My aunt averted her face as though annoyed by my coupling Will with Tom in the same breath.

Having begun to talk, I continued; and our conversation for some time was all about the *Childe Harold* and convict ships. My uncle knew a good deal about this sort of vessel. Long association with seafaring people had taught him much that is not commonly known to lawyers. He explained that ships chartered for convicts often went to Deptford to fit out. The lower decks were cleared fore and aft; strong bulk-heads of oak, frequently loopholed for muskets, erected; hatchway openings strongly railed and protected; bed-boards set up in tiers within the whole length of the prison, after the manner of a soldiers’ guard-room.

‘I dare say,’ said he, ‘the *Childe Harold* will get about five pounds a ton. Not bad pay, as times go. The captain receives so much a head for every man delivered in the colony. This makes him careful. Formerly, the skipper took the job in the lump, and the more deaths during the voyage the better, because deaths saved victuals. If Butler wants to sail I hope he’s pretty well.’

‘Why?’ I asked.

‘They’ll carry no sickly convicts to sea,’ said he. ‘The surgeon inspects the fellows and rejects those whom he considers unfit for the voyage. But they’re mostly so wild to get transported that they’d cheat Old Nick himself; and I’ve heard of surgeons being humbugged into taking men who died before the Scillys were fairly astern.’

‘Tom, when I saw him,’ said I, ‘was as strong and well as it was possible for a man to be who is everyday put to killing work.’

My aunt eyed me askant; my uncle softly drummed upon the table and then suddenly burst into a speech on the delights of transportation. He felt strongly on this point.

He said he knew of country labourers who had called upon the parson of the parish to know what crime they could commit to insure their being transported.

‘Letters are read in village ale-houses,’ said he, ‘from rogues who are making money and doing well in New South Wales or Tasmania. The writers hail from the district, and they tell their friends how Bob, whom the country-side knows and who was transported for burglary, is receiving a hundred a year as tapster at a tavern, and how Bill, who was lagged for stealing wheat, has taken a large farm near Sydney. Transportation ought to increase crime in this country. I am not surprised that the people of Australia should be apprehensive that morality is on the increase amongst us.’

‘How do the respectable people out there,’ inquired my aunt, ‘relish our turning their country into a dustbin for our own vile sweepings and offal?’

‘The system’s liked. We send them labour for nothing. Labour they must have, and they get it free. In the West Indies

they have to pay handsomely for slaves ; in the colonies the slaves called convicts cost their masters nothing but their keep.'

'Let us change the subject,' said my aunt ; 'really all this talk of convicts and transportation makes me feel as if one was just out of jail oneself. I wish they would give Will another vessel. I do not at all like the idea of a convict ship.'

'Pshaw !' exclaimed my uncle, and left the room.

Next day I called upon Mr. Woolfe and requested him carefully to ascertain what or how many ships had been accepted by tender for the transport of criminals between this and a date I named to him. I promised him a handsome fee if he could accurately find this out for me. I don't know how he went to work ; probably he obtained his information direct from the Admiralty ; I did not inquire. But in a few days he managed to learn all I desired to know, and without my having told him that I was aware the *Childe Harold's* tender had been accepted, he informed me that the only transport taken up,

the only ship, indeed, whose services were required down to the end of the year, was the *Childe Harold*, and that Government would not call for further tenders till the following spring.

I came down one morning to breakfast, and the first thing I saw lying upon my table was a peculiar-looking letter. I snatched it up, and instantly saw that the handwriting was Tom's. It was not three months since I had visited him, and therefore I instinctively guessed that he was about to be removed, and that leave had been granted him to communicate with his friends. It was a supreme moment; it was a crisis in my life. My hand shook; I could scarcely open the letter. It was a prison sheet, with certain jail-rules of which I forget the nature printed in a corner. The letter ran thus :

‘MY DEAR MARIAN: I am permitted to write that I may inform you I have been told by the governor I am to make one of a batch of convicts to be removed from this hulk for transportation to Hobart Town, Van

Diemen's Land, by a ship sailing on or about November 12. I hope you are quite well. I am tolerably so. I have nothing to complain of, but I shall be glad when the time comes for our departure. The rules will permit you to pay me a visit to bid me farewell.

‘Yours affectionately,

‘THOMAS BUTLER.’

I easily understood the meaning of the cold, formal style of this letter. A single injudicious sentence might have caused the governor, through whose hands it passed, to withhold or destroy it. Tom was right; he could not deliver himself too briefly and dispassionately.

I read this letter a dozen times over and kissed it as often. It seemed that an extraordinary coincidence was about to happen; I mean that the vessel in which Will was an apprentice was to prove the very ship which would carry Tom across the seas. I was strangely agitated; in a manner semi-delirious with the sudden wild play and disorder of my spirits. Tom was to be trans-

ported to Van Diemen's Land. I would follow him. I would immediately find out if any vessel was sailing for Hobart on or about the date of the *Childe Harold's* departure. But, then, suppose the destination of the *Childe Harold* should be changed without my knowing it! Or suppose she should sail without Tom, whilst I, not guessing this, should be on my way to the ends of the earth, thinking to find him there!

I read the letter again. I paced the room as though I had gone mad. My maid put the breakfast on the table, but I could not look at food. Why, how could I be sure of my ever meeting Tom again, of my ever seeing him or hearing of him, indeed, if I did not go out in the same ship with him, if I was not certain that he was not one of the convicts on board?

How was this to be done? I bitterly well knew that no passengers were received in Government felon transports? Could I obtain a berth in the *Childe Harold* as stewardess? Was there any sort of post aboard her that I, as a woman, was qualified to fill?

Whilst I thus thought, half distracted by the hurry and confusion my mind was in, I stopped at the window and, looking out, saw a young sailor walking on the pavement opposite. He was dressed in pilot cloth and a cloth cap, and was a very pretty lad; perhaps sixteen years old; something girlish in his looks, however, his hair being of a pale gold, his figure thin and his face without colour. He came to a stand, with his face my way, and laughed at something that was happening under my window; perhaps a dog fight, but I was too full of thought to take notice of the noise of the curs. My eye dwelt upon the pretty lad with a sort of pleasure. He looked up and saw me, and kissed his hand, but so girlishly and childishly that, though I instantly drew back, I did not somehow feel offended. When I peered again he was gone.

All on a sudden an extraordinary idea entered my head. It had been put into it by the sight of that girlish-looking sailor lad. I set off pacing the room afresh, frowning, talking aloud to myself, halting to smite my hands together.

‘It is to be done!’ I kept on thinking. ‘It will be the surest and the only way! Why did not I think of it at once?’

And then I placed myself opposite a long glass that reached to the floor and surveyed my figure, turning myself on this side and then on that. My eyes shone. My cheeks were as full of colour as though I had been burnt by the sun. I lifted my dress to clear my ankles, and stepped backward and forward before the mirror, imitating as best I could the peculiar rolling gait I had always admired in Tom.

I had arranged with my cousin to take a plain dinner with me at one o’clock, and we were then to take a turn in the West End. But for this having been settled, I must have sought him at his house at once, and traced him to wherever he might have gone, so crazy was I with the eagerness and hope my extraordinary, startling idea had raised in me. I could not bear to sit alone; never did time pass so slowly; I’d look at the clock and find that only a few minutes had passed, when I could swear that half an hour was gone.

I put on my hat and walked toward White-

chapel, and paused at the window of every marine outfitter's shop I came to. From one of these shops a black-looking fellow with a great hooked nose and a white hat stepped forth and accosted me in a thick lisp. He asked me what I would like to buy. I pointed to a monkey jacket in his window, and inquired the price. He said I should have it, a bargain, and named four pounds. I was moving on, when he begged me not to be in a hurry. Would I give three pounds ten shillings? I told him that I did not wish to buy; he followed me a considerable distance, lispng first in one ear and then in the other:

‘What would you give? Would you give three pounds? Would you give fifty bob and an old dress? Have you any old shilver to exchange or shell?’

He quitted me at last; but though I looked into other outfitters' shops, I asked no more questions.

When I reached home, I found that my cousin had arrived. I ran up to him, and exclaimed:

‘Will, I have heard from Tom! Read the letter! Here it is! It reached me this morning!’

He said with a grimace:

‘The very paper they make them use has an Old Bailey look.’ He then read the letter, and cried out: ‘Why, Marian, this seems as though we were to take him!’

‘Yours is the only ship, Will. I am certain Tom will go with you. Is it not extraordinary?’

He looked at the letter again and said:

‘The dates tally. I was at the office of the owners yesterday, and I learn that we sail about the 12th. But Tom speaks here of Van Diemen’s Land. That’s certainly not known at the office. I asked the question, and they said it was not known whether it was to be Launceston or Hobart Town or Sydney.’

‘It will be all the same,’ I replied, ‘so long as he goes in your ship.’

‘I hope it won’t be to Norfolk Island, for his sake. You look strange, Marian. What’s put all that fire into your eyes? And you

breathe as if you'd been running. Tom's letter has upset you.'

'It has done me so much good that I feel almost a child again, Will.'

He took the letter from me to look at it, as though my words had made him doubt that he had gathered its import.

'But, Marian,' said he, 'he'll be leaving the country next month.'

'Well, dear?'

'Isn't that separation? I mean, it's not like having him within reach of even a three-month visit.'

'There'll be no separation,' said I.

'You really mean to follow him?' I viewed him steadily without speaking. 'Alone, as you are?' he continued. 'All the way to the other side of the world, where you haven't a friend and where the chances are—the chances are—' he repeated slowly, then paused and cried out: 'Why, yes, you have the love and spirit to do it, and when done it will be nobly done, to my way of thinking. But it will be like making a felon of yourself, Marian.'

I put my hand on his shoulder and looked him in the eyes.

‘You know, Will, I couldn’t live separated from Tom.’

‘Don’t stare so. What eyes you have! Do they shine in the dark?’

‘He is an innocent, suffering man, and I am as much his wife at heart as though his wedding-ring were on my finger. I mean to do more than follow him. If he goes in your ship I shall sail with him.’

The young fellow drew backward from my hand with a movement of astonishment.

‘Impossible!’ he exclaimed.

‘Stop! Before you say a word—but stay: wait till we have dined. I have much to talk to you about. There will be no going to St. James’s Park this afternoon.’

My maid had entered to lay the cloth, and I broke off nodding and smiling at him, and went upstairs to remove my outdoor things.

CHAPTER XIV

SHE DRESSES AS A BOY

ON our sitting down to dinner I made him gather by my looks that I would talk of anything sooner than Tom before my maid. When I had dismissed the girl, Will lay back in his chair and said: 'It will be a withering stiff joke, Marian, if Butler sails in the *Childe Harold*. It will be precious awkward for me. I shan't be able to speak to him, I suppose—not even to nod, I dare say. A perfectly innocent man, too; one of the best sailors out of London or Liverpool, a man who's dined with father and mother and been a welcome guest at their house.'

I waited a moment and then said: 'And my sweetheart, and husband some day. Why didn't you add that?'

'It was at the end of my tongue. It'll increase the awkwardness. It's beastly un-

pleasant enough to see the friend of your family dressed as a Newgate dandy and in chains, but when you've got to cut him—I mean when the sentinels won't let you look at him—he being all the while your first and only cousin's sweetheart and engaged to be married to her! But if he's to be one of our convicts, I'll take some big risks, Marian, to let him know that I consider him as innocent as I am, and that I'm all his friend down to the very heels of me.'

'Will, I have an idea, and I want you to help me to carry it out.'

'What is it?'

'Do you love me?'

'With all my heart, and will do anything I can or dare do for you and Tom.'

'Tom is sure to sail in your ship, and I must sail in her too.'

'But how? But how?' said he, a little petulantly. 'Haven't I told you that the ship won't book passengers? They'll reconstruct her below decks fore and aft, and every inch of her is hired for the lodging of convicts and soldiers and sailors.'

‘I mean to sail in her for all that. It’s to be done, and I’ll tell you how I mean to do it.’ And here I got up and began to pace about the room with excitement whilst I talked. ‘I can’t ship as a woman, but I can ship as a boy and as a stowaway.’

His face screwed itself up into a strange expression of mingled mirth and amazement.

‘I’ll make a smart-looking boy,’ I continued. ‘I saw a lad this morning that might well have been a girl. The sight of him put this scheme into my head. I’ll get my hair cut close and dress as you do. I’ll have a story ready; I’ll take a name, and when I’m discovered I’m just a common runaway, one of the scores of lads and grown men who every year sneak into ships and coil themselves out of sight and turn up far out at sea. And you tell me, Will, this isn’t to be done?’

‘You’d do anything. You’d scrub Old Nick white. What wouldn’t you do for Tom?’ said he, still preserving his kind of gaping look. ‘But you’re never in earnest, Marian?’

‘I swear by my dead father, I am, then,’ said I, confronting him and speaking in deep

tones which trembled with passion, enthusiasm, and resolution.

‘You’ll get no clothes to deceive the eye with that figure of yours,’ said he.

‘If that’s the sole objection, come here to-morrow, Will.’

‘The sole objection!’ he cried. ‘One of a score, you mean. What do you know about the sea? Oh, yes, you can give the names of things; but call yourself a stowaway, and tell me where you’re going to hide?’

‘You shall tell me,’ said I, sitting close beside him.

He ran his eyes over the room whilst he reflected, and said: ‘Here’s to be a gutted ship; keep that in mind. Down aft ’ud be out of the question; they’d have you out before you warmed the hole you hid in, and you’d be ashore packing along with a constable before the Isle of Dogs was out of sight.’

‘Then it won’t be aft,’ said I.

‘Forward! Why, yes,’ he went on, continuing to run his eyes over the room, in his struggles to realise the inside of his ship. ‘There’s the fore-peak—a big rat-trap, full of

coals, spare swabs, broom-handles and oil-cans. Could you hide down there ?’

‘ Yes.’

‘ What ! In blackness ? Midnight with a dense fog isn’t in it for blackness alongside the fore-peak with a hatch on.’

‘ What care I for blackness ? I know where the fore-peak is. It’s a place right forward under the fore-castle. It’ll be the place for me to hide in. You’ll be able easily to contrive to help me to drop below into it.’

‘ You’re never in earnest ?’

‘ Don’t say that ! I must be with Tom. I have sworn to myself to follow him, and wouldn’t it be a sure way, the only sure way, of my being with him, of my getting to the same place he’s bound to, of my ending all risks of missing him and finding that he’d been sent to another settlement which, without friends to help me, I might never be able to hear of—wouldn’t my sailing in his ship be the only sure way for him and me to keep together ?’

The young fellow grew thoughtful as he listened.

‘I don’t say,’ he exclaimed, ‘that it’s quite impossible; but look here, Marian. Suppose, if only for the sake of argument, I call over the roll of such objections as occur to me.’

‘Do so.’

‘I’ll suppose that you are dressed as a boy and that you deceive the eye.’ I nodded. ‘I’ve agreed to sneak you on board, but how am I to do it.’

‘A little thinking will show us.’

‘I succeed,’ he continued, ‘in getting you into the fore-peak unobserved. How long are you to be kept below?’

‘I’ll go on board,’ said I, ‘when the ship is alongside the hulk. I’m your friend, a visitor. You’ll be on the look-out for me. Who’ll notice us? You’ll easily walk me forward under pretence of showing me the ship. Tell me this: Where do you ship your crew?’

‘At Gravesend.’

‘Are you sure?’

‘Yes, I’m sure. The ship’s worked by lumpers and riggers till the convicts are aboard. We then drop down to Gravesend

and await the crew, who arrive in a hoy in charge of a crimp. All this I know. You may take my word for it.'

'Who occupies the fore-castle until the crew come on board?'

'Nobody. The lumpers and riggers sleep ashore.' His eyes brightened, and he cried: 'I see what you're driving at! You've thought it out pretty closely, Marian! But you're never in earnest, surely?'

'Go on with your objections, dear.'

'We'll suppose you're safely stowed away in the fore-peak. The convicts come on board. I keep a bright look-out, and find that Butler is not one of them?'

'I have considered that,' said I. 'You'll manage to communicate with me. If Tom is not one of the convicts, I must come out of my hiding-place whilst the captain is able to send me ashore. If Tom's on board, I'll not want to hear from you till England's miles astern.'

'How am I to communicate with you down in the fore-peak?'

'You'll find out, dear. There are ways. And aren't you a sailor, Will?'

He laughed, but without much merriment, and said: 'Suppose I smuggle you into the fore-peak when we're off Woolwich. We may be a week beating down Channel, and another week before we've got far enough to suit you to show yourself. Head winds are head winds at sea. How are you going to feed yourself in the black hole?'

'We'll lay in a stock of provisions,' said I.

'Who's to stow the grub?'

'You—by degrees.'

He laughed again and said: 'How are you going to find where the food is? You're not to be trusted with a light down there, you know.'

'The food must be placed where I can put my hand on it in the dark.'

'And before we've been twenty-four hours under way the hatch is lifted, and down drops a huge whiskered man called a bo'sun with a lighted lantern right on top of you.'

'No hatch can be lifted in such a hurry,' said I, 'but that I can find time to hide myself. But pray go on spinning these little cobwebs which you call difficulties.'

‘I’ve knocked up a regular barricade already,’ said he; ‘something bigger than you’re going to climb, Marian.’

‘Do you think so?’ I said, smiling. ‘Well, I’ll heighten your barricade for you, and still you shall help me to scale it. I’m a boy stowaway; I must carry nothing to sea but the clothes I stand in. But you’ll ship a large crew, and you’ll have a big slop-chest, so there’ll be the materials for a rig-out when I want one. I emerge when the proper time comes and am walked aft to the captain. Now, what will he do with me? He may put me on the articles as an ordinary seaman. That must certainly end in my helping the cook or doing cabin-work. But then, there’s my sex to fall back upon in case of impracticable duties. I declare myself a woman—let them invent a motive for my being on board; they’ll find me dumb in that. Some of the guard are sure to be married, the wives will be on board, and there’ll be female quarters for me if I own my sex. But it will be a strong forcing of my hand to bring me to it. Once a boy, Will, I’m a boy till I step ashore.’

He stared at me with admiration and excitement, as though he listened to some wild, romantic story of adventure.

‘All that is material lies shaped in my mind,’ I went on. ‘Of course, a great deal must be left to chance.’

‘What will father and mother think?’

‘They mustn’t know. Why need they know, Will? Put it thus: In any case I go where Tom is sent. That being certain, what can it signify to aunt and uncle how I go? Instead of following in a passenger ship, I choose to make sure of my object in leaving home by putting myself into the same vessel with Tom. Your telling your father would only lead to this: He and your mother will tease me to death with representations of my folly without causing me to swerve a hair’s-breadth in my resolution. And they might do me this mischief: with the best intentions in the world, they might inform your captain that I mean to dress up as a boy and hide myself in his fore-peak. No, not a word to father or mother, Will. This is quite my business and our secret.’

All the while I was talking I was pacing the room, occasionally stopping to gesticulate or to approach him close and grasp him by the arm. Now he got up and began to walk about, too, rolling to and fro as though the floor had been a ship's quarter-deck, whilst he swore that I had too much spirit for a woman, that my scheme was too daring, that if I knew what a fore-peak was like in a heavy head sea, with the prospect of a fortnight of blackness along with the risk of dying of hunger and thirst, without possibility of escape unless I was liberated, I'd quit the scheme as hopeless.

But all this I had expected. I had never dreamed he would immediately come into my plans. He said he raised objections for my sake, not for his own. To be sure, he would get into very serious trouble if it was discovered he had helped me to smuggle myself into the ship. He was willing to take all risks to do me a vast service and to make me happy; but wasn't it his duty to keep me, his cousin, a handsome, well-nurtured, fine young woman, out of the black and filthy fore-peak

of a merchantman and preserve me from what might follow discovery ?

I let him talk and feigned to sympathise with his generous, sympathetic dread of the consequence of my scheme. Yet some time before we sat down to the tea and toast I rang for, I had worked him by entreaty, sometimes by tears, by eager impassioned representations of possibilities of my plan into a partially acquiescent mood. He kissed me, held my hand, called me his sister, declared he would help me if he dared ; I must give him time to think ; he'd go on board his ship and take a look round and talk over the matter with me again. We arranged a meeting for the day after next, and he left me after solemnly promising to keep my plan and our conversation secret.

I sat alone all that evening thinking of this long talk. One objection of his perhaps sunk a little with me when I was by myself musing ; he had figured me arriving at Hobart Town where I was without a friend, and he had imagined Tom being sent up country to a part where the only house for miles might be

the person's to whom the Government handed him. But I resolutely said to myself: I must take my chance; this may not happen; in any case I shall be in the country where my sweetheart is.

Partly to please myself, and partly to convince my cousin, I went to a large outfitter's shop in the Minorities next morning, and representing that I wished to make a present of a suit of clothes to a young sailor friend I asked the shopman to show me a number of sizes in pilot coats and cloth trousers. I said that I was about the height and breadth of the young man for whom I wished to buy the clothes. The shopman measured me round my chest, took the length of my arms and of my figure and then made up a parcel of the clothing that came nearest to the measurements. A lad walked behind me to my house with this bundle, and sat in the hall whilst I took the clothes to my bedroom and secretly put them on.

The first suit I tried fitted me as though cut for my shape; though the material was stout, it buttoned loosely over me and gave

me the chest of a plump lad. The trousers had the flowing cut of the tarpaulins of those days ; the swell of the cloth at the extremities made my feet look ridiculously small, and I saw that I should require stout boots if my feet were not to betray me.

I stood in front of the glass and was perfectly well satisfied with the figure I made. I have already said that my beauty inclined toward coarseness, and I counted upon this as a perfecting touch for the masquerade when I should have had my hair cropped close. I kept what I needed, and paid the lad who took away the remainder of the clothes. My purchase comprised a cap, waistcoat, coat and trousers, and a large red cotton pocket-handkerchief, a flannel shirt, and a loose silk neckerchief such as seamen wear in a sailor's knot. These things amply sufficed for the experiment I desired to make.

Some time on the following day, before the hour at which I expected Will, I dressed myself in the sailor's clothes, but my hair was so thick and plentiful that I was scarcely able to coil it all away upon the top of my head so

as to secrete the bulk of it under my sailor lad's cap. After a fashion I succeeded ; I held up a glass and observed that, with the cap on, the back of my head might very well pass for a man's at a little distance. I next rubbed some rouge over my temples and eyebrows and cheeks to give my face a look of sunburn.

On the staircase I met my maid. She started, and cried out, and stared, not in the least degree recognising me.

'What pretty girl are you?' said I, 'maid or mistress? A fine woman looked out of her bedroom window just now, and seeing your hall door open I made bold to enter. Where is she? I can't find her.'

I spoke at length purposely to try an experiment with my voice on her accustomed ear, but seemingly my attire had changed my voice as completely as it had transformed my figure.

'How dare you enter this house?' she exclaimed, and then she began to screech out : 'Miss Johnstone, here's a strange man in the house. Mr. Stanford——' And she ran downstairs calling for Mr. Stanford.

I sprang and caught her when she was on my parlour landing and twisting her around exclaimed :

‘ Don’t you know me ? I’m your mistress. I wish to play a joke off on my cousin. Look, do you know me ? ’ and I thrust my face into hers.

She uttered a variety of exclamations such as, ‘ Well, I never ! ’ and ‘ Who’d ha’ thought it ? ’ and ‘ Lor’ what a handsome young chap you make to be sure, miss, ’ and giggled and blushed and eyed me from top to toe with astonishment.

‘ Would you know me after looking a bit ? ’ said I.

‘ No, miss. There never was no artfuller make-up in a stage play. ’

‘ Didn’t you recognise my voice ? ’

‘ It sounded like your figure looks, ’ said she.

‘ Well, ’ said I, ‘ when Mr. Will Johnstone arrives, open the door, show him in as though you supposed I was in the room, and then shut the door smartly upon him. ’

Whilst I waited for my cousin I practised

some walking. I got in front of the long glass and advanced toward it, and marked such points of my gait as I considered suggestive and suspicious. I found my steps too short, but after practising a little I guessed it would not be very difficult to walk like a man. I looked short in my clothes and appeared to have dwindled six or eight inches, so greatly is stature heightened to the eye by the long robes of my sex.

Whilst I was rehearsing as a young sailor-man in front of the glass, I heard Will's knock downstairs. I placed myself in front of the window as though I was a stranger waiting. The door of the room was opened and shut by my maid according to my orders, and on turning I saw Will.

'Oh, I beg pardon,' said he, 'I thought Miss Johnstone was here.'

'She'll be here shortly,' said I.

He stared hard and oddly, as though he pricked his ears on my speaking, but certainly he no more recognised me than my maid had. I continued to look out of the window and spoke with my back to him.

‘A pleasant day,’ said I.

‘Aye, it’s nice weather,’ he answered. ‘You’re of my calling, I see. Been long ashore?’

‘I’ve not been to sea yet,’ I answered, half turning my head his way to talk to him. ‘My cousin Marian’s kindly taken me by the hand and given me a rig-out and found me a ship.’

‘Cousin Marian!’ he exclaimed. ‘I’m a cousin of hers, too. What cousin might you be?’

‘My name is Simon Marlowe,’ said I, rounding upon him and looking him full in the face. ‘My mother was Miss Marlowe. Who are you?’

I don’t believe he would have known me even then but for the sudden laugh I burst into at the sight of his face. That laugh was my own, familiar to his ear as the whistle of his boatswain’s pipe.

‘Well, I’m shot!’ he cried, with a gape of astonishment, then burst into a roar, capered up to me and, grasping me by the hands, skipped to and fro like a savage, eyeing me

all over and swearing whilst he danced that he wouldn't have known me in a hundred years ; that I was the prettiest little sailor-man in the world. Twenty such things he said, then released me to clap his hands while he laughed until he was purple.

I pulled off my cap and tossed it on the sofa and sat down, copying the rolling motion of the seaman in every movement of my body.

'You must go upstairs and shift before I can talk,' said Will. 'Look at your hair ! I shall die of laughing.'

I ran to my bedroom, changed my clothes, dressed my hair and returned. I was secretly half wild to hear what he had to say, and had no notion of spoiling this interview by keeping him merry and roaring at my clothes. I found him looking at Tom's miniature.

'What a handsome chap he is !' he exclaimed ; 'but I fear the hulk will rub some of his beauty off.'

'There's no hulk afloat or jail ashore that's going to spoil his beauty,' said I. 'What can you tell me to give me heart ?'

'Are you still in earnest ?'

‘Oh, don’t begin so, dear.’

‘It’s a wild, mad scheme,’ said he. ‘Father and mother will think me a fiend for helping you instead of reporting you. But I see this, you mean to follow Tom, anyhow. No man living deserves such a magnificent love as yours. You’re one mass of loyalty and devotion from head to foot.’

‘Will, you are here to say you will help me!’ I exclaimed, bending toward him and lifting my hands and clasping them in a posture of prayer to him in the passion of anxiety that was upon me.

‘I am more willing to help you,’ said he, ‘than I was when you talked to me the day before yesterday—for this reason: I’ve been on board the *Childe Harold*. She don’t tow over to Deptford till Wednesday next. I met our carpenter on the quayside, and asked him if he knew how they meant to fit out the vessel for’ard. He said he’d heard they meant to bulkhead a space off in a line with the fore-castle entrance above, to serve as a prison, the hospital to be aft. “Will they leave the store-room bulkhead standing?”

said I. "Yes," said he; "otherwise the prisoners 'ud be climbing into the fore-castle through the hatch." I went aboard and had a look. When I talked to you about the black fore-peak, I had forgotten the line of main-deck that runs right for'ard. The space betwixt that line and the deck overhead is used as a store-room. Why had I forgotten this? Because, to tell you honestly the truth, Marian, I was never once down in that part of the vessel so as to remember it. The store-room would make a different hiding-place from the fore-peak I described. The fore-peak's under it. There they keep the coals. You never could have hidden in it. But the store-room should be middling clean; black as a dog's throat, mind you, but not deep like the fore-peak. The fore-castle, where the men sleep, is immediately over. If a person wanted to get out, he could knock on the closed hatch, and there'll be men in the fore-castle to hear him. The horizon has cleared a trifle since I looked into that store-room.'

'How big is this store-room?'

‘A good size,’ he answered. ‘Seven feet high; the beam I don’t know.’

‘And the fore-castle hatch is within reach of my hand to thump at if I want to get out?’ I exclaimed. ‘It will be the one place in the whole ship for me, Will!’

‘There’s no other place, and that’s a fact.’

‘The stores’ll be clean and sweet enough, I dare say—bolts of canvas, casks of stuff, spare lines and such things. I’ll be able to put myself out of sight if your bo’sun or any other man should come down with a light. I shall need water to drink. How about that?’

‘You’re talking as if the job was settled.’

‘It is settled,’ I cried, taking him by the shoulders and playfully pushing him backward in a sudden transport of mingled emotion. ‘Is not fresh water to be sneaked below whilst the ship’s fitting? I’ll think it over and tell you how it may be done.’

‘I’m not coming to you to learn my business,’ said he with a toss of his head that ran a gleam from his eyes like a sparkle of water swept by a sudden wind.

‘What are you going to do this afternoon, Will?’

‘Nothing.’

‘Come with me to the East India Docks, and we’ll board your ship and talk things over. We’ll then go the Brunswick Hotel, drink tea there and settle everything.’

He eyed me doubtfully; his heart was not yet in it, though the dear fellow was coming my way. I went upstairs to dress myself for the trip, the hour being about three, with daylight enough to follow to serve my end. Yet though we were together till eight o’clock that night, talking and planning and scheming, I found him still as reluctant at the end as at the beginning. He had three objections. First, he considered that his keeping the matter secret from his father and mother was like telling them a lie. Next, Tom might not prove one of the convicts of his ship. Suppose he (Will) should be unable to communicate with me in my hiding-place until I had been carried too great a distance from England to be set ashore; I should be in a convict ship, a woman locked up with

rogues and villains, sailing to Tasmania for no purpose at all, with the chance of missing my sweetheart and never meeting him again in this world. And, third, the young fellow seemed to shrink from the notion of my being alone in a colony.

I began to despair of him at last, and, growing defiant after three or four days of talking with him without his drawing closer to my wishes, I resolved to look about me and see how I might help myself, and I plainly and hotly told him that, whether he chose or not to give me a hand in my enterprise, he would find me on board his ship all the same, if it came to my spending a year's income in bribing the lumpers and riggers at work on the vessel to conceal me.

He went away from this talk and nothing then was settled; but on the following morning he came by appointment to go with me for a turn on the river as far as Woolwich, and on our way to Blackwall he said he had made up his mind to help me.

CHAPTER XV

SHE TAKES A LODGING AT WOOLWICH

THIS gave me exactly a fortnight in which to prepare for my departure, for now it was settled that the *Childe Harold* was to drop alongside H.M.S. *Warrior* on November 12, receive her cargo of convicts next day, then to proceed to Gravesend, where the crew would come on board, and then head direct for the Antipodes. What arrangements had I to make, do you ask? First, as to the disposal of my home. I had sometimes thought of selling it, conceiving that if Tom lived to regain his liberty he would abhor a country from which he had been inhumanly and unjustly expelled, and settle abroad. But on reflection I made up my mind to keep the house, knowing that it was always very saleable property should I wish to convert it into money.

So, a day or two after Will and I had come

to a thorough understanding and everything was arranged so far as human foresight could provide, I sent my maid down-stairs to request Mr. Stanford to see me. He came, and I opened my business with him at once without any needless civilities.

‘I am going abroad, Mr. Stanford,’ said I. ‘I am going to leave England, and I make you an offer of this whole house, furnished,’ and I named a price by the year.

He wished to question me as to where I was going and how long I would be absent; but my behaviour soon forced him to swallow his curiosity and to confine himself to the question of the hire of the house. It ended in his agreeing to take the house off my hands on my own terms, and that same day I got Mr. Woolfe to draw up an agreement which Mr. Stanford and I signed. I then wrote to my trustees to inform them that I was about to leave the country and gave them instructions as to the receipt of the rent from Mr. Stanford and the payment of my income. The plate and many cherished objects which had come to me from my father

and mother were packed and sent to my bank.

I recount all this in a plain, sober-headed way, but let me tell you, it was a time of wild and frightful excitement to me. I had a hundred things to think of, a hundred stratagems to practise. I gave money to Will to procure a stock of food for hiding warily by degrees in the black lodging I was to occupy under the fore-castle. He found he could not manage single-handed. Though he was an apprentice in the ship and had a right to go on board whenever he thought proper, his services were not required until the vessel was equipped and ready to drop down to Woolwich. He feared he would be noticed and then watched, if he was seen frequently to enter the fore-castle, and it ended in his bribing a rigger, who was a brother of one of the crew of the *Childe Harold* during her last voyage, to help him to store water bottled for me to drink whilst I was in hiding. The man asked no questions, my cousin told me; he merely grinned when he said that the stowaway was an old schoolfellow of his, whose father had

failed in business, and he grinned again when Will tipped him two sovereigns.

For my part I was wholly fearless when I looked forward. My heart beat high. I had but two anxieties: One lest my uncle Johnstone should discover what I was about and stop me by warning the captain of the *Childe Harold*; the other lest Tom at the last should be detained on board the hulk for a later ship. For this latter difficulty I had provided with Will. But as to my uncle and aunt, I told them plainly that I was going out to Tasmania, and that I only waited to learn that Tom was on board the *Childe Harold* to follow him by the first ship. You will suppose that neither of them had the slightest suspicion that my ship was to be Tom's convict ship herself. How could such an idea enter their heads unless Will blabbed, which he had taken his oath not to do? Mr. Johnstone could never dream that I meant to dress myself up as a boy and hide under the *Childe Harold's* fore-castle.

One night, and that was the last I spent at his house near the Tower, he talked of my

resolution to follow Tom till we rose to high words. Will was out, or I dare say my temper might have brought him to side with his father and mother, which would have raised a feeling between us, and ruined my hopes so far as he went. Mr. Johnstone said he thanked God I was no girl of his. He thanked God his only child was a boy. What would my father, if he were alive, think of my following the fortunes of a convict?

I answered that my father was a true man and would always wish me to be a true woman. My father was not a man to oblige me to betray and desert Tom because a dreadful trouble had come upon the poor fellow; and here I cried a little.

‘Still, my dear, Captain Butler is a convict,’ said my aunt. ‘I wish to say nothing about his guilt or innocence, but he wears felon’s clothes, he is loaded with irons; he lives with the scum of the nation——’

‘And, guilty or innocent, he is irrecoverably disgraced,’ broke in my uncle.

‘Why did you undertake his defence, then?’ I cried.

‘A man is innocent till he is proved guilty,’ answered my uncle. ‘By the logic of the law I undertook the defence of a guiltless person.’

This enraged me. It was like burning or cruelly wounding or torturing me in any savage way to speak ill of Tom or to cast a doubt upon his innocence.

The quarrel was put an end to by my uncle walking out of the room. I stayed a little, wishing to cool down that I might say good-bye with grace and heart, with something indeed of the real love and gratitude I felt; for I knew when I said farewell it would be for the last time. But my aunt was cold and vexed; she resented several things I had said in the heat of the quarrel; she took my kiss lifelessly, and I went out of the room. On the landing I paused; I longed to return and kiss her warmly and seek my uncle, that this parting might have the tenderness my heart longed for, now that my passion was ended; but I said to myself: ‘No, they may suspect a final leave-taking in my behaviour,’ and so I stepped into the street and drove home.

I had told my maid I was going abroad, and next day I paid her and gave her a substantial gift in money over and above her wages, and she left me, crying. I grieved to part with her. She was a good and faithful girl, and would have been glad to go with me anywhere, even to the other side of the world.

Five days before the ship was to haul alongside the hulk I went to Woolwich, and took a lodging as close to the river as the respectable accommodation of that dirty town permitted. I hired two rooms for the week. The landlady asked no questions. She was satisfied with my paying for the lodgings in advance. After I had engaged those rooms, I crossed the river afresh and returned to Stepney to fetch a little trunk. I was to be a stowaway, and of all ocean travellers the stowaway is the one who sails with the fewest effects. A hackney coach stood at the door to convey me to Blackwall. I carried my little box down-stairs and put it with my own hand into the coach. I then returned and stood awhile in my room thinking. The walls and tables were stripped of all that I cherished.

The room looked somewhat bare. I slowly cast my eyes around and thought of the past. I conjured up my father and mother. I recalled my early life, my lonely holiday trips, much of what I had felt and suffered. I then knelt down and prayed, rose and, going to the wall, kissed it, and, with dry eyes but with a sobbing heart, departed.

Whether Mr. Stanford saw me or not I am unable to say. He did not appear, nor did I catch a sight of him at his window.

No one knew that I had gone into lodgings at Woolwich, not even Will, though I had told him that I should be leaving my home on such and such a date, and that he was to keep a sharp look-out for me when his ship lay off the *Warrior*. I did not want to burden him with the obligation of telling lies. My uncle might hear that I had quitted Stepney. He'd ask his son where I was; and Will, with a clear conscience, would be able to answer on his honour he had no idea.

As you may remember, Tom had written that I was privileged to bid him farewell before he sailed. I thought deeply on what

I should say when we met, and finally resolved not to utter a syllable about my going with him in the same ship. He was a sailor, and would understand what I had made up my mind to suffer and endure for his sake. He might refuse, and sternly refuse, to allow me to attempt the wild, extraordinary adventure I had planned with Will. Indeed, I feared his love. He was a man to give notice of my intention sooner than suffer it. I guessed he would not bear to think of my locking myself up in a ship full of convicts. Well knowing his own profession, he would say to himself, when she is discovered how will she be treated? If she maintains her disguise as a boy, what sort of work will they put her to? If they find out that she is a woman, what sort of treatment will she receive from the master and mates, from the officers in charge of the guard, from the seamen forward? All this and much more would run in his head, and his love might betray me that he might save me.

Three days before the convict ship was to haul alongside the *Warrior*, I went on board the hulk. This time I gained the deck by the

dockyard stairs and the gallery that stretched to her gangway. The sentry or warder, in bright buttons and a glazed military cap and a stiff stand-up collar with a bright crown upon it, asked me my business, and bade me pass when I told him that I was going to visit a convict and explained that it was an errand of farewell. It was a very gloomy sullen day; a dark fog stooped to the breast of the river and the water flowed seaward in a stream of liquid greasy mud. The few ships in motion oozed out of the fog, black, wet and gaunt, and vanished with a sulky reel. The prison-ship looked horribly grim and miserable; her decks were dark and very damp, the fog dripped from the edges of her boxed-up structures forward, the cold gleam of moisture glanced from whatever the eye rested on; the pole-masts vanished in the thickness overhead; and the air was bitterly cold with the chill of damp.

A convict, in the dress of the felon, with a bullet-shaped head and a flat face, stared at me through one of the galley-doors; he had badges upon one arm, and was probably a

cook. Several warders moved about the decks, and a soldier in a red coat, but unarmed, stood forward, talking to somebody inside one of the galleys. All the convicts were ashore at their spirit-breaking work. I walked to the quarter-deck. I saw no visitors. A warder was approaching me at the moment when the deputy-governor came up through the after-hatch. I was unveiled, but whether he remembered me or not, no look of recognition was in his face. He asked me my business on board.

‘I have come to visit Thomas Butler,’ I answered, ‘a prisoner.’

‘When were you here last?’

I gave him the date.

‘You are too soon,’ said he. ‘The rules are every three months.’

‘He wrote to tell me I was privileged to pay him a farewell visit,’ I said. He bade me wait a minute, and walked to the governor’s quarters. He returned soon, and said: ‘Thomas Butler is one of a batch of convicts who are to be sent across the seas on the 12th of this month.’

‘I know that,’ said I.

‘You will have to bid him farewell on board the ship he embarks in.’

‘I shan’t be able to see him, then?’ I cried, putting on an air of consternation and grief, that I might obtain some particular information from him.

‘I am sorry you will have no other opportunity of bidding him farewell.’

‘But tell me, sir,’ cried I, ‘shall I be certain of seeing him if I go on board his ship?’

‘Undoubtedly. You will be allowed the customary quarter of an hour.’

‘How am I to know he will be one of the convicts on board?’

‘Oh,’ said he, very good-naturedly (and I will say here that a kinder and better-tempered man than the deputy-governor of H.M.S. *Warrior* was not to be found among the prison officials of his time)—‘oh,’ said he, smiling, ‘there is no fear of his not being on board. The surgeon has passed him. He is one of the batch.’

My heart beat quickly on hearing this.

He may have wondered at the effect of his words. He darted a keen look, with an expression of mouth that was like saying he was not used to the friends of convicts exhibiting delight on hearing that they were to be shipped off.

‘Can you tell me how he is?’ said I.

He gave me a sort of mocking bow as though he would intimate that he had told me enough. I took the hint and left the hulk, wondering that under the circumstances the warder or sentry should have passed me on board, but greatly rejoicing over the information I had received that Tom would undoubtedly be one of the convicts of the *Childe Harold*.

On reaching my lodgings, I wrote the following letter to my sweetheart. I dated it, but omitted the address :

‘Dearest,—I visited the *Warrior* to-day, but was informed that the regulations oblige friends to bid farewell on board the convict ship when the people are in her. If I do not visit you to say good-bye, you will not wonder ;

you will understand there is a reason ; you know my heart as I know yours, and will not mistake. We shall meet sooner than we think. Many swift ships are weekly sailing to the colonies. I kiss you and pray that God may watch over you.

‘Your own

‘MARIAN.’

I addressed this letter and went out to post it. It was then shortly after two o'clock in the afternoon. Having posted the letter, I walked a little distance until I came to a hair-dresser's shop. I entered and said to a woman who sat behind the counter that I wanted my hair cut. She took me upstairs, and in a few moments a man stepped in.

‘I wish you to cut my hair,’ said I.

‘The hends of it, miss?’ said he, bowing and smirking and rubbing his hands.

‘The whole of it,’ I exclaimed.

He opened his eyes, but said nothing whilst I removed my hat. He then exclaimed : ‘That's a beautiful 'ead of hair to remove, miss. . . Hall; do. I understand? Or can it

be singeing and cleaning that you want done?’

‘All,’ said I, ‘and pray be quick, for there is not much daylight left.’

He took down my hair, and in the glass I sat in front of I saw him fall back and admire it. I also witnessed expostulation in his face, and he stole doubtful looks at me in the mirror as though he questioned my sanity; on which I peremptorily repeated my request that he would cut off all my hair. A woman’s hair is her glory, they say, and I felt as though I was parting with a crown of beauty as I watched my long raven-black tresses in the glass falling under the shearing snip of the remorseless scissors. But there was a sense of triumph in me, too—the elation of love—the feeling that what I was doing was for Tom’s sake, and that this was the very least of the sacrifices I was willing to make for him.

I obliged the man to crop me as close behind as though I were a convict, but to leave me enough in front to part my hair on one side. He did as I bid him, but when I came to part my hair I found it stubborn; the old

parting down the middle would insist on showing; so I told him to crop me close that the hair might bristle on end.

When he had done so, I scarcely knew myself. The man looked at the hair he had cut off and asked what I wished to do with it.

‘I don’t know,’ said I, putting on my hat.

‘I’ll give you a guinea for it, miss, and throw in the job of cutting it.’

‘It is beautiful hair and worth three times what you offer; but you shall have it for a guinea, nevertheless.’

He paid me the money, and I left the shop. When I got to my lodgings, I locked the door, dressed myself in the boy’s clothes I had brought with me from Stepney, put on my cap, and then stood upon the table that I might see my full length in the chimney-glass. I was perfectly satisfied with the appearance I made. I looked just a hearty, strapping young lad of seventeen, out and away more manly to the eye than the saucy boy who had kissed his hand to me. I sprang on to the floor, and for a long while practised the paces of a man, striding round the room and

stretching my legs, and whilst I walked I told over a few things I might require when I should be hidden under the fore-castle of the convict ship, and paused at the table from time to time to note down the articles.

And, first of all, I was resolved not to lie in a black hole for a week, perhaps a fortnight, without the means of procuring a light. So I made an entry in my trifling list of wants of a parcel of small wax candles of the very finest quality, such a parcel as I could carry in my pocket without observation. I guessed that I should require a light only when I wished to eat and drink, that I might see where my food lay, and that the candles, used for a few minutes at a time and at long intervals, would last till Will released me. I also put down in my list a tinder-box and matches.

(My memory is at fault. I cannot recollect that we had the common lucifer match in 1838.)

The other items consisted of a couple of clay pipes, a clasp-knife, and a pair of strong shoes that should thicken out my feet to the

look of a youth's. These things, and the boy's clothes I was disguised in, comprised all the luggage I intended to take.

The next day was unspeakably wretched both to body and soul. It blew hard, it was bitterly cold, and it rained incessantly, with a frequent clouding of grimy sleet. I struggled to the several shops to purchase the articles I had jotted down, and then returned to my lodgings, where I remained the rest of the day. To-morrow the *Childe Harold* was to haul alongside the hulk. I was to embark upon a more wild, perilous, romantic, heart-shaking undertaking than probably was ever conceived by woman since the days of the mother of all. I was banishing myself from my home, from friends, from every convenience and luxury of shore-going life within the reach of my purse. I was going to hide myself in the black and noisome hole of a convict ship, without having the least idea of what lay before me whilst I remained hidden and after I should have been discovered. I was going on a long voyage in a suit of boy's clothes and no other wearing apparel, and

should be taking my chance of being equipped by the charity of the captain out of the ship's slop-chest, or of falling into rags, and so, perhaps, discovering my sex, unless it should be sooner detected, or unless I should find it necessary to confess it.

Yet I had not the least fear ; nay, I preserve the recollection of an increasing emotion of triumph swelling into elation and hope and confidence as the hours of that wet, cold, and miserable day rolled past and brought me to the night whose dawn should start me on my adventure. Never was my love for Tom so great as now in this lonely time of waiting in those Woolwich lodgings, when I reflected that all I had done, was doing, and yet hoped to do, was for him, that he might know me to be true as the faithfulest of women could be to the man of her heart ; that he might be gladdened by presently discovering I was with him in the same ship ; that his guiltless spirit might be supported by knowing we were together, that we should arrive together, and that whilst his term of infamous, unjust servitude lasted, I should

never be far off, patiently and hopefully waiting for him.

Yet I could not close my eyes all that night. I seemed to catch the sound of the storm-whipped river, though my lodgings were at a distance from it. Would Will be on the look-out for me? I kept on thinking. Suppose he should be detained by illness ashore; many things I supposed; and then I thought to myself, if he should not be on board, yet if I can contrive to enter the ship it will be strange if I don't find my way into the hiding-place under the fore-castle. But if he is not on the look-out or, indeed, not in the vessel, I shan't be able to invent an excuse to go on board of her. The guard will be received at Deptford; the surgeon superintendent will be already, no doubt, in the ship; there will be mates and apprentices on the poop and about the deck. I knew it would be impossible for me to cross the gang-way without being challenged as to my business. What, then, should I do if Will was not on the look-out for me?

These were considerations to give me a

sleepless night. I lay in bed till seven, then rose, dressed myself in my ordinary apparel, and telling the servant to have breakfast ready by half-past eight, I passed out of the house and went quickly toward the river.

It was still blowing fresh, but the morning was dry, gray, hard with cold. I passed through some mean little streets of small houses, such as labourers would occupy. Hard as the morning was, the mud lay soft as grease in the roadways. Here and there was a public-house, two of which—the ‘Warrior Arms’ and the ‘Justitia’—were named after the prison-hulks. Though it was barely good daylight as yet, these public-houses looked as if they had been open for some time. In places I tasted an acid smell of stale beer and tobacco as I passed along these mean little streets, and most of the people I saw, dressed in a sort of velveteen or corduroy, conversing near the public-houses, many of them of the flat-faced type of Englishman, with streaks of black hair down their cheeks, and a habit of glancing sideways without turning their head, might

have passed for convicts enjoying a free-and-easy half-hour.

I came within view of the river, and looked along Woolwich Reach, but saw no signs of such a ship as the *Childe Harold* approaching. The hulks floated huge and motionless off the Dockyard and Arsenal. White clouds of fog were creeping over the flats of Plaistow, and the river streamed cold and yellow into the bleak gray haze of Bugsby's Reach. A waterman approached and bade me good morning. I looked at the man, and recognised him as one whose boat I had hired on several occasions. He told me he had come to settle on this side of the river, as the Calais steamers and the hoys were making business scarce for the likes of him down the Stairs, Tower and Wapping way. He asked me if I wanted a boat. I answered no; I was waiting to view a convict ship that I understood was to come alongside the *Warrior* hulk that morning.

‘Ay, that’s right,’ said he. ‘You’ll be catching sight of her any minute. The convicts go aboard to-morrow, I believe. She’s

the *Childe Harold*. Too fine a ship for such dirty service, to my mind.'

Whilst I stood waiting and conversing with this fellow, who was one of the civillest of his kind on the river, a handsome barque under a main-topgallantsail came rounding to abreast of us out of Galleon's Reach, driven by the fresh south-easterly wind. She was painted green and cleanly sheathed; her canvas was white as a yacht's, and the whiter for the contrast of the glare of it upon the sullen gloom of the atmosphere. Her stem, as though it were red-hot, boiled the water at her bows; the white swirl rushed past the ruddy gleam of the copper into a ribbon-like wake of yeast, short and melting quickly for the lack of brine, and the picture was one of exceeding beauty and of inspiriting warmth and colour. She swept into the haze of Bugsby's Reach, and vanished with a gleam of her topmast canvas showing in a hovering sort of way for a breath or two over the land abreast of the East India Docks.

The waterman at my side was loud in praise of her. 'I haven't seen a pootier

barque in this here river since the *Arab Chief* towed down some weeks since.'

I started and looked at him, and exclaimed: 'The *Arab Chief*!'

'Ay, the *Arab Chief*, the pootiest little vessel out of any port of the country.'

'Is she not a Liverpool vessel?'

'That's her, mum. She sailed from the Mersey and brought a cargo to the Thames. There was a difficulty. The captain as had her, 'tis said, has come into one of them hulks.'

'When did she sail from London?'

'I don't know, but I could easily find out for ye.'

'Which docks did she load in?'

'I believe she hauled out of the London Docks,' answered the man.

I struck my hands together, and said: 'I wish I'd known she was in the Thames. I'm interested in that vessel. They charged her captain with scuttling her. Not the worst villain in any of those hulks yonder is capable of a fouler lie.' I checked myself, on observing the manner in which the man was

regarding me ; and, happening then to glance up the river, I espied the towering fabric of a big ship that was magnified by the haze into the proportions of the masts and yards of a line-of-battle ship looming astern of a little tug whose smoke blew black and scattering upon the level of the yellow water.

‘ That’ll be the convict ship,’ said the man at my side.

I gave him a shilling, and walked some distance to be alone, and stood watching the ship. She floated stately and grand in tow of the tug ; the Government stores in her were a comparatively light lading, and she sat tall, presenting a frigate-like height of side. She was massive aloft in her sea-going trim, sails bent, running rigging rove, royal yards across. A small red ensign at her peak stood with the wind like a painted board there. It was ebb-tide, somewhat slack, and she came along on the languid stream of it, head to the breeze, with white water spitting at the bight of the hawser betwixt her and the tug.

As she glided abreast I stared at her with devouring eyes. Oh, she was the *Childe*

Harold, right enough! I was a sailor's child, and knew a ship after seeing her once as you would know a face. Was Will aboard? I would have given my left hand then for five minutes' use of a telescope to make sure. I saw a few figures on the poop and three or four red-coats of soldiers on the fore-castle, but she was far too distant for the sight to distinguish the people. I stood watching until the tug had floated her abreast of the *Warrior*, by which time I heard a clock strike nine. I then walked quickly toward my lodgings, half frozen with having stood for about an hour and a half in that bitter morning wind and in the atmosphere of the November yellow river.

Though without appetite, I forced myself to make what would be called a good breakfast. The sitting-room adjoined the bedroom; I rang the bell and toasted myself before the fire whilst I waited until the maid had cleared away the breakfast things. I then went into my bedroom, unclothed and dressed myself in the sailor-dress. This done, I mixed some soot and rouge, and lightly rubbed the com-

pound into parts of my face. The effect was good ; you would have supposed I was fresh from the ocean. The clothes I had taken off I made into a parcel and addressed it thus :

‘ To the care of the Commander,

‘ Government Transport *Childe Harold*,

‘ Off Woolwich.’

This I had made up my mind to do whilst I lay thinking during the long and stormy watches of the previous night. It was just a speculation, and, good or bad, would amount to little or nothing. The landlady of the lodgings, on finding I did not return, might send the parcel to the ship ; if not, no matter. The captain, on receipt of it, might hand it to the steward to hold, concluding there was a blunder somewhere. If he rejected it and sent it back, still, as I say, no matter. I valued not the clothes one farthing, but, I had reasoned, if the parcel found its way on board, and my sex should be discovered, there would be my clothes in the ship ready for me.

Having addressed the parcel, I put the little packet of candles and the other few

matters I had bought into my pockets, and counted my money. I had between four and five pounds, one guinea of which I had received for my hair ; and I need not tell you that this was even more money than it was prudent I should have if I was to act the part of a stowaway supposed to be driven from home by poverty ; that is to say, if I should come to be searched, which on board a convict ship was extremely probable.

I paused to consider if more remained to be done. I then opened the door and listened, and, finding all quiet, slipped down the short stairs, passed into the street, and walked quickly in the direction of the Dock-yard.

And perhaps I should repeat here that I had paid the woman of the house in advance for her lodgings, and that I had departed leaving her in my debt, so to call it, for I had purchased everything I had eaten, and left enough behind me in groceries and the like to last her for a week

CHAPTER XVI

SHE HIDES AS A STOWAWAY

I FELT excessively nervous when I first set out toward the Dockyard. I had never before shown myself in public in male attire, and imagined that everybody who looked at me saw that I was a girl. I was somewhat reassured, however, by a hulking fellow in leggings crossing the road and asking me for a pipe of tobacco. I told him I had none. 'A cuss'd lie,' he roared fiercely. 'Gi' us the plug out of your jaws, you damn'd shell-back!' I pushed on. He shouted after me, and, though his language was by no means refined, I did not dislike to hear him, for what he said left me in no doubt that he took me for a sailor.

I came to a place where I got a view of the *Warrior*, and I saw the convict ship close alongside of her with some of her yards

braced forward clear of the pole masts of the hulk. It was blowing very fresh and bitterly cold, and the yellow ripples ran in little showerings of spray. I walked to where the wherry was to be had, and with some trouble, after waiting and looking about me, found a waterman.

‘Put me aboard the *Childe Harold*,’ said I.

‘Do you belong to the ship?’ said he.

‘Yes.’

‘If you’ll stand a drink I’ll save you a couple o’ bob,’ he exclaimed; and I guessed by the way he looked at the water that he preferred to lounge in the warmth of a public-house to taking a fare.

‘What do you mean?’

‘Tell the sentries you belong to the ship, and they’ll let you go aboard through the hulk.’

‘No, I want to go aboard in my own way.’

‘Come along, then.’

I got into his boat and, after he had breathed upon his hands and beaten his breast hard, he fell to his oars. I looked

eagerly at the ship as we approached. The consuming anxieties I had endured for weeks and months, compressed into ten minutes of sensation, would not have been harder to bear than what I now felt. The waterman pulled under the stern of the *Childe Harold*; a figure standing on the quarter was visible; I believed it was Will at first; he turned, and I saw he was not my cousin. A flight of gangway steps ran down the side of the ship, with a grating at bottom, close upon the water, to step on. The boat swung to, and the waterman waited for me to step out. I gave him two shillings, and kept my seat whilst I ran my eyes along the line of the bulwark rail.

Where was Will? Was he not keeping a look-out? Had I arrived sooner than he expected? Nay, was he on board? And, as I thus thought, my heart sinking like lead in my breast with a sudden weight and passion of despair, the dear fellow stepped into the gangway and looked down.

He looked down, but he did not know me. I cried out: 'Will, oh, Will! There you are! There you are!'

He stared again, but answered no further than by beckoning, whilst he bent his neck inward to glance forward and aft along the decks. A soldier, but without a musket, showed at the side at this instant, and looked over into the boat, whistling. 'Come up!' said Will. I sprang on to the grating and ascended the steps.

'How are you, old fellow?' exclaimed my cousin, grasping me by the hand, and shaking it warmly, admirably acting the part of one who receives a welcome visitor. 'This is how we barricade the convicts, do you see?' How are all at home? On my word, this is kind of you! My quarters are forward! Come along and smoke a pipe, and then I'll show you the ship!'

The soldier lounged across the deck and leaned against the barricade, looking at the great hulk, whose topmost tier of grated ports, and whose dingy height of bulwarks and rude, hut-shaped structures forward seemed to tower to half the height of the convict ship's lower masts. I darted a swift glance round, and observed two figures on

the poop, both young fellows. Some soldiers stood forward near the convicts' galley. A small group of men—lumpers or riggers—at the main hatch within the barricade inclosure were smoking and talking. I had no eyes for anything but the people who were visible. A heavy silence hung upon the hulk, and, saving the voices of the group at the hatchway, all was still on board the *Childe Harold*, so that you plainly heard the hissing of the strong wind in the rigging, and the quick, fretful splashing of water rippling swift betwixt the two ships.

‘Your visit is exactly timed,’ said Will. ‘The captain’s ashore; the chief mate’s below; the second mate’s indisposed in his cabin, and the third mate’s in the hold. Come!’

He motioned with his hands, as though he showed me the ship. A woman stepped out of one of the galleys with a bucket of hot water, and passed us. She was a pretty young woman, and she glanced at me with a faint smile as she went by.

‘That’s a soldier’s wife,’ said Will, speak-

ing fast but softly, and pointing as though he still showed me the ship. 'There are several on board, and a number of kids. You've well timed your arrival. What marvellous courage you have, and how confoundedly well you look! There never was a smarter sailor—to the eye. Where have you been? Your skin's brown. Been abroad? Surely not. You haven't had time. The ship's almost empty, you see. The crew'll join at Gravesend, as I told you they would. We have a few runners on board from Deptford, and twenty soldiers in charge of a captain and subaltern—Lord, how I hate soldiers! The convicts embark this afternoon or tomorrow morning. There are only three apprentices, including me, this voyage; two are aft there on the poop. It don't matter if you are seen. They'll think you went ashore by way of the hulk. But I must get you below before the chief mate comes on deck. I'm supposed to be keeping a look-out at the gangway, and I mustn't be missed.'

All this he hurriedly said as we walked forward to his quarters, which, as you may

remember, were in a wing of the fore-castle on the port or left-hand side. He slid the door open in its grooves and we entered. A couple of hammocks swung under the ceiling; three sea chests were secured along the bulkhead; a little flap table hung opposite those chests, and the rest of the cabin's equipment consisted of shelves containing tin dishes, pannikins, knives and forks, and such things.

'I should like to give you a kiss, Marian,' said he, 'but it would seem unnatural in that dress.'

I answered by giving him a hearty hug.

'What pluck you have, dear girl!'

'Will, we should lose no time.'

'But some things must be said,' he exclaimed. 'Is there still doubt of Tom's being one of them, d'ye know?'

'None,' and I repeated what the deputy-governor had said.

'Still, I'll watch the men as they come aboard,' said he. 'Where have you been since you left Stepney?'

'In a lodging at Woolwich.'

‘What a wonder you are!’ He stepped back to run his eye over me and said: ‘They’ll never discover your sex whilst you stick to that dress.’

‘Do your father and mother know I’ve left home?’

‘Yes. Stanford called upon them. They plied me close, but I could not tell them what had become of you. They’ll board the next ship for Tasmania and see if you’re in her. Mother was at Deptford to bid me good-bye. She’s very well, thank God. And so’s father.’ He put his head through the door to peep along the decks, then pulling a piece of paper from his pockets, said: ‘See here, Marian; look at this sketch well, that you may remember it. It is the interior of your hiding-place. This square’s the hatch; those wormy-looking things on the left are coils of rope; those are cases and beyond are bolts of canvas. This stuff amidships is a quantity of twine. To the right are more casks; fresh water, of which we shall need plenty and to spare with two hundred and thirty convicts aboard, not to mention soldiers and sailors

and women and children. This tracing is meant for spare sails. They'll make you a comfortable bed. I've cut this end adrift,' said he, putting his finger on the tracing, 'so that you will be able to lie down and cover yourself over after groping and feeling about a bit. It's devilish dark; that's the worst of it. And here's a great timber which terminates on deck in what we call a knight-head.'

'I know,' said I.

'You'll find your stock of food and water stowed close against that timber, shored and hidden by a coil of rope.' He opened his chest and handed me a knife for cutting tin. 'You'll want this,' said he, 'for the canned grub; it's mostly soup and bully. You'll find a pannikin for the water. I'll visit you as often as I can. Have you a watch?'

'No. I'm a stowaway. I have run away in poverty and must act the part. Keep this for me, Will,' and I gave him what money I had.

'The cook's mate will be up and down for coal,' said he, pocketing the money. 'You'll get light when they lift the hatch, then you'll

hear voices and see people. Shrink out of sight. Lie small, or all this trouble will have been for no good.'

'If it should happen that Tom's not one of them, you'll contrive to let me know before we're out of the Channel?'

'Trust me, old girl.'

'If he is one of them, you'll let me know when it will be safe to come out of hiding?'

'Trust me there, too.' He put his head out to take another look at the decks, and then said: 'You'll have to fib, Marian, when you're brought out. I'm sorry, but it must never be known that I've had a hand in hiding you. You will say, when questioned—and it won't be far from the truth, either—that you bribed one of the Deptford riggers to provision you. If they find the bottles and the tinned stuff, they'll go into the matter closely. We may contrive that they shan't find anything; if they do, your yarn must be called "The Rigger Corrupt; or, The Lie and the Lumper." Now wait.'

He went into the forecabin and returned. 'The coast's clear. Come along!'

I followed him instantly. It was but a step from his cabin to the fore-castle entrance. The gloomy interior was empty and silent. Betwixt the giant windlass and the hawse-pipes were stretched the massive links of the chain-cable. I heard the tramp of a few soldiers overhead, marching to and fro to keep themselves warm.

‘Take that end of the hatch-cover and lift with me,’ said Will, in a voice of excitement, looking behind him.

I put my hand to the cover, and between us we raised it. The hatch was little more than a man-hole, big enough to admit two men at a time.

‘Now look!’ cried Will. ‘Have you the heart? It’s not too late! See how black it is! And you may be obliged to remain down there a fortnight!’

‘Give me your sketch of the inside,’ said I.

He quickly handed it to me. I looked at it and then put it in my pocket, and, without another word, I put my foot on the ladder of rungs nailed to the bulkhead, and in a moment was at the bottom.

‘Keep that hatch open whilst I take a short look,’ I softly exclaimed.

‘The mate’s calling me,’ he answered. ‘I’ll come again, if possible, later on ;’ and he closed the hatch.

The blackness was utter. I had heard tell of dark rooms in which jail-prisoners were locked up for punishment, but no dark jail-cell could be blacker than the blackness of this ship’s store-room. I stood for some time motionless under the hatch where I had stopped when Will shut me down ; I hoped to get the use of my eyes, and imagined that this profound dye of blackness might be owing to my coming out of the light into it. The silence was that of a burial-vault : I heard the swift beat of my heart in my ears and nothing more. After a bit, small, delicate worms or fibres of fire began to tremble and crawl upon the blackness. I knew them to be the phosphorus in my vision, and heeded them not, but winked with a fancy of extinguishing the strange flames.

I now moved a little way forward, stooping, with my arms outstretched, and touched

what I might know by the hempen smell and the feel of the stuff was a mass of twine. It was dry, and I seated myself upon it. I will not say that I was without fear; my heart beat very fast. And yet even at this early affrighting stage—for it was not only blackness; it was loneliness also—I rejoiced in the thought that I was in this hiding-place at last; that every difficulty had been overcome; that a most heart-breaking burden of anxieties had fallen from me with my descent into this hold, and that presently my dearest and I would be together in the same ship, with a future of possibilities before us such as I could only have sighed for and wept for and grieved myself into the grave for had I remained at home.

I then bethought me: Suppose the hatch should be suddenly opened, I shall be discovered. I carefully lighted one of my little wax candles, and, holding it up, looked around. The flame was small, but it enabled me to see as much as I needed. Will's drawing of the interior was exact. To the left were the casks and coils of rope and bolts of canvas,

and in the middle more coils of rope and a mass of twine and a quantity of canvas buckets, lanterns and so forth, and to the right were the fresh-water casks and the sails. Candle in hand, I easily made my way to that part of the sails which Will had cut adrift. I looked, and beheld stowed in the place Will had indicated a quantity of black bottles and tins, and a sack which I put my hand upon and found half full of ship's biscuits.

Still keeping the candle burning, I seated myself on the loosened portion of the sail, and found I could easily draw canvas enough over me to conceal me in an instant at the first alarm or to keep me warm when I slept. I then blew out the light and replaced the candle in my pocket, very grateful that I had had foresight enough to provide me with the means of seeing when I needed my eyes. The blackness was at first insupportable, and again and again my hand sought my pocket for a candle; but I restrained myself when I reflected this was but the beginning, and that if I burnt out my stock of candles quickly I might have to lie for a week or ten days or

perhaps a fortnight in this blackness. I comforted myself, however, by reflecting that there would be noise enough overhead to relieve this fearful oppression of stillness and loneliness when the crew came on board.

I use the word 'oppression.' It was physical. My spirits were easy. My conscience slept. What had I done that it should rebuke me? I was proving myself faithful to the man I had sworn to be true to, and whom I loved with all the heart which was my life, and with all the soul which was my intelligence. I was offending no father, grieving no mother, and, as to my uncle and aunt, I knew this, that whilst I chose to hold myself betrothed to a convict, it was all one to them whether I followed him in my own fashion or waited at home for his return.

By-and-by I thought I would make an experiment, and creeping out of the sail and groping about I touched a tin of preserved meat. In those times provisions were not delicately tinned as they are now. It was a common practice then to seal up whole joints of cooked legs of mutton and roast sirloins

of beef in tins. Some of the tins Will had stowed for me with the aid of his corrupted lumper or rigger were of the size of small drums, others were little; these contained a sort of soup, well-known at sea, called soup and bouilli. The first tin I touched was one of them. I opened it easily with the knife, and found the contents solid enough to be removed in wedges. I then felt for a biscuit, and made my first meal. I was obliged to light a candle to seek for the pannikin; I counted fifteen quart bottles of water, one of which I opened, being thirsty. All these things were well hidden within the embrasures of the timbers and by the ropes and other matters which fenced them round about. I groped my way into the sail again after blowing out the candle, always taking care to command as much of the slack of the canvas as would enable me to hide in a moment if the hatch should be lifted.

Here now was I, fairly warm, tolerably provided for, suffering from nothing worse—but then to be sure nothing worse in its way could well be imagined—than an over-

whelming oppression of silence and a blackness deeper than blindness. How does the ordinary, the average stowaway manage, I remember wondering? He sneaks in his rags into dark, rat-hidden holes, and lingers without food or water for days. Yet it is contrived; the stowaway is the commonest incident of ocean life: sometimes, indeed, he is found a skeleton at the bottom of a chain-locker; but it is the rule with him to emerge ribbed, gaunt, half-nude; he is then set to work, and lands well-lined with ship's beef and pork to flourish perhaps in a country where he is wanted.

On a sudden I heard a strange noise. I had been some hours in this place when I caught the sound. It was a sort of dull tremble, regular in its pulse, with a metallic note threading it. I pricked my ears and strained them hard, and my heart then began to beat fast; no, I could not mistake! The sound was the tread of many shackled feet passing over the deck and descending the hatchway and coming into the prison, whose foremost bulkhead partitioned off the hiding-

place in which I lay. The noise continued like a flowing of water. I heard no voices, not the dimmest echo of a human cry, nothing but the dim thrill of the tramp of many feet with irons.

Perhaps an hour may now have passed. Suddenly the hatch was thumped as though kicked, and the cover lifted. I pulled the sail over me, leaving a corner for one eye to peep out, and lay motionless.

‘I’ll fetch it,’ cried the familiar voice of Will. ‘I saw the stuff stowed, and know where it is. Here, give us hold of the lantern and stop where you are.’

His figure descended; he then raised his arm and received a lighted lantern. I dimly discerned the shadow of another figure in the hatch, the square of which lay in a faint gray. Will stepped from under the hatch, holding the lantern, and then put the light down beside a cask, so that the shadow of the cask was upon that part where I was. He moved here and there in a seeking attitude till he had approached the sail close; then said in a whisper: ‘Where are you, Marian?’

I raised my head.

‘Hang me if you don’t roll up as though you were the sail itself,’ said he. ‘How do you like it?’

‘It’s horribly black and lonesome, but I’m content. I’d not be elsewhere.’

‘The convicts are aboard, and Butler’s one of them. I saw him and nodded. He looks well—I mean pretty well.’

I started up and cried: ‘Will, if you see him to speak to, don’t tell him I’m here. He loves me too much to suffer it. He’d betray me. He’d get me sent ashore.’

‘I don’t think so. I’ll not say a word. No chance indeed; you mayn’t talk to ’em. I can’t stop. The mate sent an apprentice here for a canvas bucket. I took the job to give you the news and see how you are. Anything you want, Marian?’

‘Nothing, Will.’

‘I forgot to tell you there’s the handle of a scrubbing brush lying near your provisions; you’ll easily get it by feeling. You’ll need it to knock with should you want to get out. Bless you, my brave old woman!’ and so,

whispering, he took a stride, picked up a bucket, handed it and the lantern up, and sprang through the hatch, which immediately afterward was closed.

The news of Tom being in the ship so cheered up my heart that I could have sung aloud amid that black silence. I kept my eyes shut that I might not see the blackness, and tried to figure the interior of the prison ship. What sort of quarters had the convicts? Should I ever have a chance of viewing the 'tweendecks? I recollected that Will had told me the prison—by which I understood the cell in which the convicts would be confined for punishment—was just the other side of the bulkhead or partition. I strained my ears, thinking I might catch a sound of the felons talking. The fancy seized me to draw close to the partition; I got out of the sail and felt along it, knowing that the extremity would bring me to the bulkhead. Putting out my hands, I felt the bulkhead, pressed my ear to the solid wooden wall and listened, but heard nothing; nothing, that is, resembling a human voice. But I caught a

sort of scuffling sound, very dim and weak, as though of many feet in motion; it was a wild, strange noise to listen to in that blackness.

I groped my way back to where the sail was loose, and lay down and covered myself as before. I had thought to find the atmosphere ice-like, yet I was not cold, being warmly clad, with plenty of sail-cloth to cover me besides. I kept my eyes closed to lighten the weight of the blackness upon the brain. My thoughts were with Tom, with our visit to this ship in the docks, with my home in Stepney. It was like taking a bruising load off my heart, to think of my sweetheart as having left the grim and horrible hulk for good, as having turned his back for ever upon the killing labour of the dockyard. It was as though he had taken one long step toward freedom. I shuddered, and my soul was sick with loathing when I thought of the hulk, of the four hundred or five hundred wretches imprisoned throughout the long winter's night in her, of the squalid rows of houses and dismantled craft along shore, of the mud and

drizzle and the fogs upon the flat and reeking lands and the bleak spirit of the streaming yellow Thames in all things, soaking chill to the core of whatever the eye rested upon, giving a sterner significance even to man's deepest intent of degradation.

And then I wondered what would happen when I showed myself or was discovered. What kind of work would they put me to? Would they force me to reveal my sex? I hoped not; I prayed not; for the discovery might lead to their finding out that I was a convict's sweetheart, and they would land me at the first port the ship touched at and ruin my scheme, and separate me, perhaps eternally, from Tom.

I fell asleep. I could not name the hour. Time had no being in that blackness. A noise awakened me. Instinct was alert even in my slumber, for the instant I awoke I pulled the canvas over my head, leaving one corner for my eye, and lay still as a corpse. The hatch was open and a figure stood under it.

'Hand the blooming shovel down,' the fellow called out. 'Never keep poor convicts

awaiting for their breakfisses. Time enough to sarve 'em so when they becomes pious and turns 'spectable sailor-men. Blowed if this 'ere hatch ain't froze! Len's a hand to lift the cover.'

A second figure dropped below. The light was so dim in the hatch above that I could distinguish nothing but the shadowy shapes of the two fellows. The hatch in the deck of the store-room was lifted. One man climbed out and handed down a shovel and a lantern, and the other descended with them into the fore-peak. A bucket was let down, and I heard a shovelling of coal in the bowels below. Presently a faint cry sounded. The bucket was drawn up, emptied into some noisy receptacle above, and lowered again. This business lasted nearly half an hour; the fellow below uprose with the shovel and lantern and put the lower hatch on, swearing to himself. He then climbed through the second hatch, which he also closed, and my hiding-place was plunged afresh into blackness.

I gathered from their speaking of the

convicts' breakfast and from their procuring coal, no doubt for the galleys, that it was early morning, and that I had slept through the night. A long, dreamless, death-like sleep it must have been in that black and silent place. The moment I sat up I was sensible that the ship was in motion. I seemed to feel that she was being strained as though dragged. Subdued noises broke from various parts of her, the creak of timber and of bulkhead; but the ship floated without the least motion; indeed, I was sure she could not long have left her berth alongside the hulk.

I lighted a candle, drank from a bottle of the water, and, having helped myself to some meat and a biscuit, I extinguished the candle and broke my fast in blackness. I did not now find this blackness the great oppression it had at first proved. I have heard that the governor of a jail considered three days of confinement in a black cell a trifling punishment until he tried it. He caused himself to be locked up for twenty-four hours; at the end of that time he could stand the blackness no longer,

and he was ever after of opinion that twenty-four hours was as long as it was safe to keep a man locked up in the blackness at one stretch.

This may be true of prison blackness. Speaking for myself, I ceased to suffer, after a time, from privation of light; though under that ship's fore-castle, with the hatch on, the blackness was as intense whilst the silence had been as profound as ever human ingenuity could contrive with bricks and mortar ashore. But, then, I had a moral support which the prisoner would be without. I was animated by the strongest of human passions; it gladdened me, moreover, to feel that I was sharing in my sweetheart's suffering and exile; and then, again, what I was enduring was of my own seeking, long awaited with impassioned eagerness.

By-and-by the sensation as of the ship being strained or dragged ceased, and the noises made by the timbers and in the hold were silenced. I guessed by this we had brought up off Gravesend, and roughly worked out a notion of the hour by first sup-

posing that we had started from Woolwich at seven and that we had towed at the rate of five miles an hour. Gravesend is about eighteen miles from Woolwich by water, and therefore I reckoned the hour to be drawing on to eleven o'clock. All this while I lay close in the sail; I never knew the instant when the hatch would be thrown open. All was still overhead, so I judged that the crew were not yet come on board.

CHAPTER XVII

HER SUFFERINGS IN THE HOLD

I LAY thinking just as one would in bed through the blackness of a long night; and in this way three or four hours went by.

It was then I heard a noise overhead, a very great hurry of feet, and sounds as of drunken shouts and singing dulled to the ear by the thickness of the plank. I knew by this that the crew were come, and I felt mighty grateful, for now I could be sure that we should soon be under way for the Channel. I supposed that the ship had brought up at a mooring buoy; certainly I should have heard the thunder of her cable roaring just over my head had she let go her anchor.

I got some biscuit and meat, and whilst I was eating in my sail the hatch was lifted. I immediately whipped under the canvas and lay like a mouse, watching in my fashion,

that is, with one eye at the edge of the bolt-rope of the sail. Three men came down, and a minute later a fourth followed. I lay motionless and terribly frightened, for they stood under the hatch looking round as though considering where to seek for what they came for. The open hatch yawned in a square of pale gray light ; I was able to see the men, but the forward part of the place where I lay was sunk in gloom. The biggest of the men, a great burly fellow of a seaman, advancing two or three steps, stopped and began to count. I understood he was counting the casks.

‘Eight,’ said he.

‘I told you that, sir,’ said the voice of Will. ‘I saw them stowed.’

‘So much the better,’ answered one whom I reckoned to be a mate, perhaps the second or third mate. ‘I’ve allowed for six. There can’t be too much spare water for such a company as we’re carrying.’

‘Right you are there, sir,’ exclaimed the burly man in a deep voice. ‘Sails, here’s twine for ye.’

‘I see it,’ said the third man, stooping and seeming to feel. They continued for a short time to talk about the contents of this store-room. I heard Will say the chief mate had ordered him to count the spare buckets.

‘Do so,’ said the man whom I supposed to be the second or third mate.

‘Bo’sun, hand us down a light. I can’t strike fire with my eyes,’ said Will.

The three men went up through the hatch, leaving Will standing alone under it. I now distinctly heard the sound of many voices; most of the newly-arrived crew seemed intoxicated if I might judge from their tipsy laughter and maudlin songs and calls. A light was handed down; Will screened the lantern by setting it beside a cask; he then came over to me. I lifted my head.

‘There you are,’ said he softly. ‘How are you getting on, old girl?’

‘Very well, Will. I have slept right through the night, and very comfortably. Give me all the news.’

‘You may hear it,’ said he, laughing.

‘The crew are aboard, drunk as casks. A sweet and noble lot of hearts. You never saw such a crew. The most ruffian-looking convicts are gentlemen beside some of them. The crimp who brought them down fished every gutter ’twixt Houndsditch and Limehouse Hole, and rejected half he hooked as not bad enough.’

‘Then we’re off Gravesend?’

‘Ay.’

‘When do we start?’

‘The tug will be catching hold of us before dark. Any rats here, Marian?’

‘None, so far. Have you seen anything of Tom, dear?’

‘Nothing.’

He stepped to the lantern and held it to my face to look at me.

‘It’s a good job,’ said he, ‘that you’ve got no hair to dress. But how jolly bright your eyes are! Perhaps I may have you out of this sooner than you expect. Pray for a fresh north-easter, Marian.’

‘Take your light away and count your buckets. Somebody may come below.’

‘I’m not going to count any buckets,’ said he. ‘I invented that yarn as an excuse to see you.’

He carried the lantern to where my provisions lay, and was looking at them and softly speaking, when a man fell right through the hatch. He fell with a mighty thud, and I screamed out. You would have supposed him killed or stunned, but he had not lain quiet one or two minutes, not long enough indeed for Will to get to him, when he began to laugh and mutter drunkenly. He then sat up, and, looking about him, exclaimed: ‘Rum casks, be gob! Whist, ye drunken teef, and they’ll lock ye up down here!’ So saying, he got upon all-fours and crawled toward the casks stowed in the left wing of this store-room.

‘What are you doing here?’ cried Will, stepping up to him.

‘Is it you, honey? Bedad, then, that makes two. Quick, sweetheart, with your gimlet and pannikin, for supposin’ it should be threacle!’ said the man, sinking into a sitting posture.

My terror was extreme. I feared that

others of the drunken crew would follow this fellow and come tumbling down after him to rummage for drink, and discover me before enough sober men could be got together to turn them out.

‘Now, up you go!’ cried Will. ‘Out you get!’ And he put his lantern down to lay hold of the man.

‘Why, what divvle are you?’ answered the brute, in a voice suddenly savage and dangerous as the growl of a fierce dog. ‘What’s this?’ he roared. ‘A stowaway? Hooroo! A stowaway, bullies! Hooroo!’ and, staggering on to his legs, he lurched towards the lad, with his fist raised.

Will was as stout a young fellow as ever buttoned a pea-jacket over his chest. He struck, and the man dropped like a shot from the hand. Excitement and fright had carried me out of the sail. I grasped the broom-handle and was in the very act of rushing to help Will, when the fellow was dropped by my cousin’s fist.

‘What’s going on down there?’ roared a hurricane voice through the hatch.

I sprang back upon the sail and covered myself.

‘Here’s a drunken scoundrel, bo’sun, pitched headlong down here and refuses to turn out!’ cried Will.

The burly figure of the boatswain came in a sprawl down the ladder. Then followed a real fore-castle scuffle. The boatswain went to work with legs and hands, kicking and hauling. The drunken Irishman blasphemed most horribly. Heads collected at the hatch, and the fellows up there roared to their wrestling, drunken, cursing shipmate to fight it out and die game. But Will and the boatswain between them proved too much for the ruffian, and, after a fierce struggle, they dragged him up through the hatch, with his old coat in ribbons. Will then descended for the lantern. He breathed very hard, and looked my way as though he would speak. I sat up and passionately waved to him to depart. He saw my gesture by the light he held, flourished his hand, and, climbing the hatch, put the cover on.

This was a terribly narrow escape, and I

felt all the weakness of my sex's nature as I sat in the blackness and realised that had the other drunken sailors tumbled below I should have been discovered and my hopes ruined.

After this I passed some wretched hours, for I never knew but that the drunken Irish sailor had told the others there were casks under the fore-castle full of strong drink, for all he could guess, and I kept on fearing that amongst them they'd lift the hatch and descend. However, nothing of the kind happened ; I got more heart as time went on and the hatch remained untouched. I heard a great deal of thumping overhead, and treading of feet as of men coming and going, and then I felt once more the same straining sensation in the ship I had before taken notice of ; I supposed we were under way, in which case the *Childe Harold* had fairly begun her voyage.

Saving the occasional lifting of the hatch at long intervals when a man went below into the fore-peak to shovel coals and send them up in buckets, nothing broke the overwhelm-

ing monotony of that black and silent time of concealment. But there came an hour, whether it was in the day or night I cannot tell, when I was awakened out of a deep sleep by many violent noises and a wild movement. The ship was at sea ; she was breasting the waters of the Channel ; and seemingly a strong sea was running, for she pitched deep and raised a most extraordinary roaring noise of foaming brine all about her bows, in the very ‘eyes’ of which I lay. For some minutes I was not sensible of the least inconvenience ; I sat up in my bed of sail wondering at the novelty of the motion and the noises ; but then I was visited by a most deadly nausea—I felt as though I were swooning into death ; indeed, the pitching motion was outrageously heavy for one inexperienced as I was to waken up to. I was just in that part of the ship where the pitching is most felt. I sank back and suffered—oh, how I suffered ! Think of me, alone in that midnight blackness, without a sup of cordial to give me a little life, as incapable of stirring as though I were dying, feeling to the height of

its anguish the sickness that is the worst of all sickness, hearing nothing but the cata-ractal rushing of water against the bows, the sudden shock and thunder of a great sea smiting quick and hard as the blow of a rock, the crazy straining of timber and cargo and strong fastenings.

In this wretched state I continued for two days. I afterwards calculated this time, and found that it must have run into two days and a night. I never ate nor drank ; I may say I neither slept nor waked ; I lay in a sort of middle state. Will never came near me ; but through no fault of his ; he later on told me his hands had been full whilst on deck, he could not invent an excuse to visit the store-room, and without a good excuse he durst not lift the hatch lest I should be discovered and he be charged with hiding me.

However, whether it was that nature could suffer no more, or that the movement of the ship even in this extreme fore part had fallen into softness and rhythm, I slept and awoke, and, awaking, found myself free from nausea and hungry. I sat up and lighted a candle ;

my hand shook with weakness, and I could scarcely stand. I drank from a bottle of water, took such food as I wanted, and made a meal. I kept the candle burning, for I was now thinking that my term of imprisonment might be drawing to an end, and that I could afford the luxury of a light. Indeed, I had not as yet consumed a whole candle since I had been in hiding.

I sat by the light of the candle till it was burnt out; the light cheered and soothed me. It was something for the eye to rest upon, and the flame was a sort of companion in its way. Once it put a horrid, frightful fancy into my mind. I thought to myself, suppose I set fire to the ship? The vessel has boats! besides, we are still in the English Channel, and help is near and abundant. The convicts would scatter, some going in one boat, some in another, or the ship might be run ashore to save life, and Tom escape. I shuddered, and blew out the light, which was now burnt to within half an inch of the candle.

I felt stronger and more comfortable. The

ship plunged softly ; I heard no roaring of the brine outside, no blows as from the shock of thunderbolts ; I guessed that the weather was fair and gentle ; but was it night or day ? I could not imagine. I had figured the high sun pouring upon the white canvas and the sea blue and splendid under him, and in that deep, vault-like blackness I'd pant for the sweetness of the air above and yearn but for ten minutes of the glory of the day. Then, in the same breath, I'd think 'It may be midnight. The sun has sunk, and a thousand stars tremble over the mastheads, and a corner of moon is lifting out of a length of ragged, black cloud hanging low over the blacker water.'

When would it be time for me to beat upon the hatch and take my chance of what was then to follow ? In any case, I dared not reveal myself till Will gave me notice, for how should I be able to tell where the ship was—whether she was not still close in with the English shore, so that the captain could land me, end my scheme, and render all I have done and suffered useless ? I must be

patient; better that Will should make no sign for a month than that I should emerge one hour too soon.

The time crept on. I heard an occasional movement of feet overhead, but all the noises were small and brief. Indeed, it was the ship's fore-castle, the place where the sailors ate, drank, and slept; where, unless all hands are on deck, there is always a watch below and consequently sleepers; so that when the voyage has fairly begun and the men have settled down to their work, there is no quieter place in a ship than her fore-castle.

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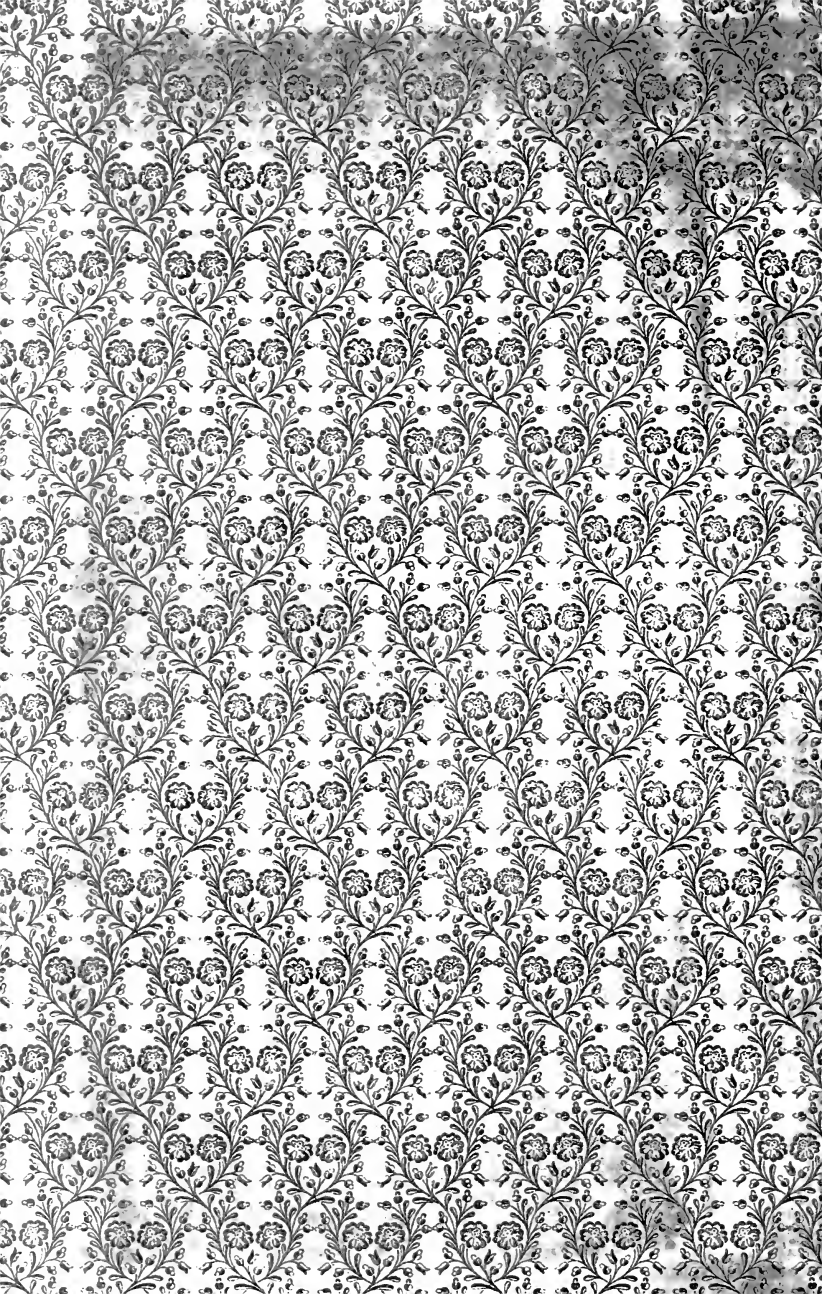
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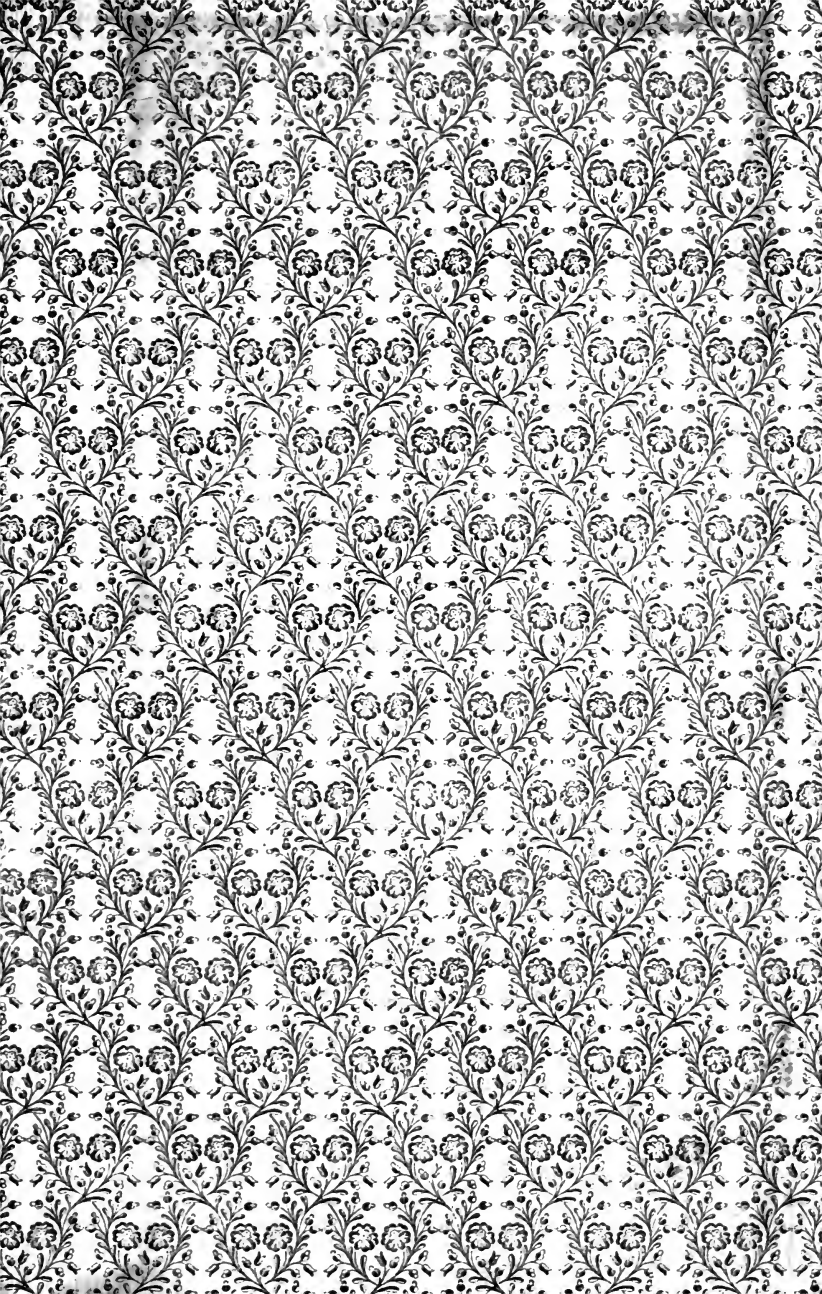
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